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21 June 2017**

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No. 4**



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Wednesday 21 June 2017

Chronology of The Parliamentary Debates

The Parliamentary History contains all that can be collected of the Legislative History of this country from the Conquest to the close of the XVIIIth Century (1803), 36 vols. The chief sources whence these Debates are derived are the Constitutional History, 24 vols.; Sir Simonds D'Ewes' Journal; Debates of the Commons in 1620 and 1621; Chandler and Timberland's Debates, 22 vols.; Grey's Debates of the Commons, from 1667 to 1694, 10 vols.; Almons Debates, 24 vols.; Debrett's Debates, 63 vols.; The Hardwicke Papers; Debates in Parliament by Dr. Johnson, &c. &c.

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Adams, Nigel (Selby and Ainsty)
Afolami, Bim (Hitchin and Harpenden)
Afriyie, Adam (Windsor)
Aldous, Peter James Guy (Waveney)
Alexander, Heidi (Lewisham East)
Ali, Rushanara (Bethnal Green and Bow)
Allan, Lucy (Telford)
Allen, Heidi Suzanne (South Cambridgeshire)
Allin-Khan, Rosena Chantelle (Tooting)
Amesbury, Mike (Weaver Vale)
Amess, David Anthony Andrew (Southend West)
Andrew, Stuart James (Pudsey)
Antoniazzi, Tonia (Gower)
Argar, Edward John Comport (Charnwood)
Ashworth, Jonathan Michael Graham (Leicester South)
Atkins, Victoria Mary (Louth and Horncastle)
Austin, Ian (Dudley North)

B

Bacon, Richard Michael (South Norfolk)
Badenoch, Kemi (Saffron Walden)
Bailey, Adrian Edward (West Bromwich West)
Baker, Steve John (Wycombe)
Baldwin, Harriett Mary Morison (West Worcestershire)
Barclay, Stephen Paul (North East Cambridgeshire)
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Barron, Rt Hon. Kevin John (Rother Valley)
Bebb, Guto ap Owain (Aberconwy)
Beckett, Rt Hon. Margaret Mary (Derby South)
Bellingham, Henry Campbell (North West Norfolk)
Benn, Rt Hon. Hilary James (Leeds Central)
Benyon, Rt Hon. Richard Henry Ronald (Newbury)
Bercow, Rt Hon. John Simon (Buckingham)
Beresford, Alexander Paul (Mole Valley)
Berger, Luciana Clare (Liverpool, Wavertree)
Berry, James Jacob Gilchrist (Rossendale and Darwen)
Betts, Clive James Charles (Sheffield South East)
Black, Mhairi (Paisley and Renfrewshire South)
Blackford, Ian (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)
Blackman, Kirsty (Aberdeen North)
Blackman, Robert John (Harrow East)
Blackman-Woods, Roberta Carol (City of Durham)
Blomfield, Paul Christopher (Sheffield Central)
Blunt, Crispin Jeremy Rupert (Reigate)
Boles, Nicholas Edward Coleridge (Grantham and Stamford)
Bone, Peter William (Wellingborough)
Bottomley, Peter James (Worthing West)
Bowie, Andrew (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine)
Brabin, Tracy Lynn (Batley and Spen)
Bradley, Ben (Mansfield)
Bradley, Rt Hon. Karen Anne (Staffordshire Moorlands)
Bradshaw, Rt Hon. Benjamin Peter James (Exeter)

Brady, Graham Stuart (Altrincham and Sale West)
Brady, Michael (Newry and Armagh)
Brake, Rt Hon. Tom (Carshalton and Wallington)
Brennan, Kevin Denis (Cardiff West)
Brereton, Jack (Stoke-on-Trent South)
Bridgen, Andrew James (North West Leicestershire)
Brine, Stephen Charles (Winchester)
Brock, Deidre Leanne (Edinburgh North and Leith)
Brokenshire, Rt Hon. James Peter (Old Bexley and Sidcup)
Brown, Alan (Kilmarnock and Loudoun)
Brown, Lyn Carol (West Ham)
Brown, Rt Hon. Nicholas Hugh (Newcastle upon Tyne East)
Bruce, Fiona Claire (Congleton)
Bryant, Christopher John (Rhondda)
Buck, Karen Patricia (Westminster North)
Buckland, Robert James (South Swindon)
Burden, Richard Haines (Birmingham, Northfield)
Burghart, Alex Michael (Brentwood and Ongar)
Burgon, Richard (Leeds East)
Burns, Conor (Bournemouth West)
Burt, Rt Hon. Alistair James Hendrie (North East Bedfordshire)
Butler, Dawn Petula (Brent Central)
Byrne, Rt Hon. Liam Dominic (Birmingham, Hodge Hill)

C

Cable, Rt Hon. John Vincent (Twickenham)
Cadbury, Ruth (Brentford and Isleworth)
Cairns, Rt Hon. Alun (Vale of Glamorgan)
Cameron, Lisa (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow)
Campbell, Rt Hon. Alan (Tynemouth)
Campbell, Gregory Lloyd (East Londonderry)
Campbell, Ronald (Blyth Valley)
Carden, Dan (Liverpool, Walton)
Carmichael, Rt Hon. Alexander Morrison (Orkney and Shetland)
Cartlidge, James Roger (South Suffolk)
Cash, Bill (Stone)
Caulfield, Maria Colette (Lewes)
Chalk, Alex (Cheltenham)
Champion, Sarah Deborah (Rotherham)
Chapman, Douglas (Dunfermline and West Fife)
Chapman, Jennifer (Darlington)
Charalambous, Bambos (Enfield, Southgate)
Cherry, Joanna Catherine (Edinburgh South West)
Chishti, Atta-Ur-Rehman (Gillingham and Rainham)
Chope, Christopher Robert (Christchurch)
Churchill, Johanna Peta (Bury St Edmunds)
Clark, Colin James (Gordon)
Clark, Rt Hon. Greg (Tunbridge Wells)
Clarke, Rt Hon. Kenneth Harry (Rushcliffe)
Clarke, Simon Richard (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland)
Cleverly, James Spencer (Braintree)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey Robert (The Cotswolds)
Clwyd, Rt Hon. Ann (Cynon Valley)

Coaker, Vernon Rodney (Gedling)
 Coffey, Margaret Ann Wishart (Stockport)
 Coffey, Thérèse Anne (Suffolk Coastal)
 Collins, Damian Noel Thomas (Folkestone and Hythe)
 Cooper, Julie Elizabeth (Burnley)
 Cooper, Rosemary Elizabeth (West Lancashire)
 Cooper, Rt Hon. Yvette (Normanton, Pontefract and
 Castleford)
 Corbyn, Rt Hon. Jeremy Bernard (Islington North)
 Costa, Alberto Castrenze (South Leicestershire)
 Courts, Robert Alexander (Witney)
 Cowan, Ronnie (Inverclyde)
 Cox, Charles Geoffrey (Torrington and West Devon)
 Coyle, Neil (Bermondsey and Old Southwark)
 Crabb, Rt Hon. Stephen (Preseli Pembrokeshire)
 Crausby, David Anthony (Bolton North East)
 Crawley, Angela (Lanark and Hamilton East)
 Creagh, Mary Helen (Wakefield)
 Creasy, Stella Judith (Walthamstow)
 Crouch, Tracey Elizabeth Anne (Chatham and
 Aylesford)
 Cruddas, Jonathan (Dagenham and Rainham)
 Cryer, John Robert (Leyton and Wanstead)
 Cummins, Judith Mary (Bradford South)
 Cunningham, Alex (Stockton North)
 Cunningham, James Dolan (Coventry South)

D

Dakin, Nicholas (Scunthorpe)
 Davey, Rt Hon. Edward Jonathon (Kingston and
 Surbiton)
 David, Wayne (Caerphilly)
 Davies, Christopher Paul (Brecon and Radnorshire)
 Davies, David Thomas Charles (Monmouth)
 Davies, Edward Glyn (Montgomeryshire)
 Davies, Geraint Richard (Swansea West)
 Davies, Miriam Jane Alice (Eastleigh)
 Davies, Philip Andrew (Shipley)
 Davis, Rt Hon. David Michael (Haltemprice and
 Howden)
 Day, Martyn (Linlithgow and East Falkirk)
 De Cordova, Marsha Chantol (Battersea)
 De Piero, Gloria (Ashfield)
 Debonnaire, Thangam (Bristol West)
 Dent Coad, Emma (Kensington)
 Dhesi, Tan (Slough)
 Dinenage, Caroline Julia (Gosport)
 Djanogly, Jonathan Simon (Huntingdon)
 Docherty, Leo (Aldershot)
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin John (West Dunbartonshire)
 Dockerill, Julia Louise (Hornchurch and Upminster)
 Dodds, Annaliese Jane (Oxford East)
 Dodds, Rt Hon. Nigel Alexander (Belfast North)
 Donaldson, Rt Hon. Jeffrey Mark (Lagan Valley)
 Donelan, Michelle Emma May Elizabeth (Chippenham)
 Dorries, Nadine Vanessa (Mid Bedfordshire)
 Double, Stephen Daniel (St Austell and Newquay)
 Doughty, Stephen John (Cardiff South and Penarth)
 Dowd, Peter (Bootle)
 Dowden, Oliver James (Hertsmere)
 Doyle-Price, Jacqueline (Thurrock)
 Drax, Richard Grosvenor (South Dorset)
 Drew, David Elliott (Stroud)
 Dromey, John Eugene Joseph (Birmingham, Erdington)
 Duddridge, James Philip (Rochford and Southend East)
 Duffield, Rosie (Canterbury)
 Duguid, David James (Banff and Buchan)
 Duncan, Rt Hon. Alan James Carter (Rutland and
 Melton)

Duncan Smith, Rt Hon. George Iain (Chingford and
 Woodford Green)
 Dunne, Philip Martin (Ludlow)

E

Eagle, Angela (Wallasey)
 Eagle, Maria (Garston and Halewood)
 Edwards, David Jonathan (Carmarthen East and
 Dinefwr)
 Efford, Clive Stanley (Eltham)
 Elliott, Julie (Sunderland Central)
 Ellis, Michael Tyrone (Northampton North)
 Ellman, Louise Joyce (Liverpool, Riverside)
 Ellwood, Rt Hon. Tobias Martin (Bournemouth East)
 Elmore, Christopher Philip (Ogmore)
 Elphicke, Charlie Brett Anthony (Dover)
 Esterson, William Roffen (Sefton Central)
 Eustice, Charles George (Camborne and Redruth)
 Evans, Christopher (Islwyn)
 Evans, Nigel Martin (Ribble Valley)
 Evennett, Rt Hon. David Anthony (Bexleyheath and
 Crayford)

F

Fabricant, Michael Louis David (Lichfield)
 Fallon, Rt Hon. Michael (Sevenoaks)
 Farrelly, Paul (Newcastle-under-Lyme)
 Farron, Timothy James (Westmorland and Lonsdale)
 Fellows, Marion (Motherwell and Wishaw)
 Fernandes, Sue-Ellen Cassiana (Fareham)
 Field, Rt Hon. Frank (Birkenhead)
 Field, Rt Hon. Mark Christopher (Cities of London and
 Westminster)
 Fitzpatrick, James (Poplar and Limehouse)
 Fletcher, Colleen Margaret (Coventry North East)
 Flint, Rt Hon. Caroline Louise (Don Valley)
 Flynn, Paul Phillip (Newport West)
 Ford, Vicky (Chelmsford)
 Foster, Kevin John (Torquay)
 Fovargue, Yvonne Helen (Makerfield)
 Fox, Rt Hon. Liam (North Somerset)
 Foxcroft, Victoria Jane (Lewisham, Deptford)
 Francois, Rt Hon. Mark Gino (Rayleigh and Wickford)
 Frazer, Lucy (South East Cambridgeshire)
 Freeman, George William (Mid Norfolk)
 Freer, Mike (Finchley and Golders Green)
 Frith, James Richard (Bury North)
 Furniss, Gillian (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough)
 Fysh, Marcus John Hudson (Yeovil)

G

Gaffney, Hugh Lawrence (Coatbridge, Chryston and
 Bellshill)
 Gale, Roger James (North Thanet)
 Gapes, Michael John (Ilford South)
 Gardiner, Barry Strachan (Brent North)
 Garnier, Mark Robert Timothy (Wyre Forest)
 Gauke, Rt Hon. David Michael (South West
 Hertfordshire)
 George, Ruth Stephanie Nicole (High Peak)
 Gethins, Stephen Patrick (North East Fife)
 Ghani, Nusrat (Wealden)
 Gibb, Rt Hon. Nicolas John (Bognor Regis and
 Littlehampton)
 Gibson, Patricia (North Ayrshire and Arran)

Gildernew, Michelle (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)
 Gill, Preet (Birmingham, Edgbaston)
 Gillan, Rt Hon. Cheryl Elise Kendall (Chesham and Amersham)
 Girvan, Paul (South Antrim)
 Glen, John Philip (Salisbury)
 Glindon, Mary Theresa (North Tyneside)
 Godsiff, Roger Duncan (Birmingham, Hall Green)
 Goldsmith, Zac (Richmond Park)
 Goodman, Helen Catherine (Bishop Auckland)
 Goodwill, Robert (Scarborough and Whitby)
 Gove, Rt Hon. Michael Andrew (Surrey Heath)
 Grady, Patrick John (Glasgow North)
 Graham, Luke Patrick (Ochil and South Perthshire)
 Graham, Richard (Gloucester)
 Grant, Bill (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock)
 Grant, Helen (Maidstone and The Weald)
 Grant, Peter (Glenrothes)
 Gray, James Whiteside (North Wiltshire)
 Gray, Neil Charles (Airdrie and Shotts)
 Grayling, Rt Hon. Christopher Stephen (Epsom and Ewell)
 Green, Chris (Bolton West)
 Green, Rt Hon. Damian Howard (Ashford)
 Green, Katherine Anne (Stretford and Urmston)
 Greening, Rt Hon. Justine (Putney)
 Greenwood, Lilian (Nottingham South)
 Greenwood, Margaret (Wirral West)
 Grieve, Rt Hon. Dominic Charles Roberts (Beaconsfield)
 Griffith, Nia Rhiannon (Llanelli)
 Griffiths, Andrew James (Burton)
 Grogan, John Timothy (Keighley)
 Gwynne, Andrew John (Denton and Reddish)
 Gyimah, Samuel Phillip (East Surrey)

H

Haigh, Louise Margaret (Sheffield, Heeley)
 Hair, Kirstene Janette (Angus)
 Halfon, Rt Hon. Robert Henry (Harlow)
 Hall, Luke Anthony (Thornbury and Yate)
 Hamilton, Fabian (Leeds North East)
 Hammond, Rt Hon. Philip (Runnymede and Weybridge)
 Hammond, Stephen William (Wimbledon)
 Hancock, Rt Hon. Matthew John David (West Suffolk)
 Hands, Rt Hon. Gregory William (Chelsea and Fulham)
 Hanson, Rt Hon. David George (Delyn)
 Hardy, Emma Ann (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle)
 Harman, Rt Hon. Harriet (Camberwell and Peckham)
 Harper, Rt Hon. Mark James (Forest of Dean)
 Harrington, Richard Irwin (Watford)
 Harris, Carolyn (Swansea East)
 Harris, Elizabeth Rebecca Scott (Castle Point)
 Harrison, Trudy Lynne (Copeland)
 Hart, Simon (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire)
 Hayes, Helen Elizabeth (Dulwich and West Norwood)
 Hayes, Rt Hon. John Henry (South Holland and The Deepings)
 Hayman, Susan Mary (Workington)
 Hazzard, Chris (South Down)
 Heald, Rt Hon. Oliver (North East Hertfordshire)
 Healey, Rt Hon. John (Wentworth and Dearne)
 Heappey, James Stephen (Wells)
 Heaton-Harris, Christopher (Daventry)
 Heaton-Jones, Peter (North Devon)
 Henderson, Gordon (Sittingbourne and Sheppey)
 Hendrick, Mark Phillip (Preston)

Hendry, Andrew Egan Henderson (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey)
 Hepburn, Stephen (Jarrow)
 Herbert, Rt Hon. Nick (Arundel and South Downs)
 Hermon, Sylvia Eileen (North Down)
 Hill, Mike (Hartlepool)
 Hillier, Meg (Hackney South and Shoreditch)
 Hinds, Damian Patrick George (East Hampshire)
 Hoare, Simon James (North Dorset)
 Hobhouse, Wera Benedicta (Bath)
 Hodge, Rt Hon. Margaret Eve (Barking)
 Hodgson, Sharon (Washington and Sunderland West)
 Hoey, Kate (Vauxhall)
 Hollern, Catherine Malloy (Blackburn)
 Hollingbery, George Michael Edward (Meon Valley)
 Hollinrake, Kevin Paul (Thirsk and Malton)
 Hollobone, Philip Thomas (Kettering)
 Holloway, Adam James Harold (Gravesham)
 Hopkins, Kelvin Peter (Luton North)
 Hosie, Stewart (Dundee East)
 Howarth, Rt Hon. George Edward (Knowsley)
 Howell, John Michael (Henley)
 Hoyle, Rt Hon. Lindsay Harvey (Chorley)
 Huddleston, Nigel Paul (Mid Worcestershire)
 Hughes, Eddie (Walsall North)
 Hunt, Rt Hon. Jeremy Richard Streynsham (South West Surrey)
 Huq, Rupa Asha (Ealing Central and Acton)
 Hurd, Nicholas Richard (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner)
 Hussain, Imran (Bradford East)

J

Jack, Alistair (Dumfries and Galloway)
 James, Margot Cathleen (Stourbridge)
 Jardine, Christine Anne (Edinburgh West)
 Jarvis, Dan (Barnsley Central)
 Javid, Rt Hon. Sajid (Bromsgrove)
 Jayawardena, Ranil Malcolm (North East Hampshire)
 Jenkin, Bernard Christison (Harwich and North Essex)
 Jenkyns, Andrea Marie (Morley and Outwood)
 Jenrick, Robert Edward (Newark)
 Johnson, Rt Hon. Alexander Boris de Pfeffel (Uxbridge and South Ruislip)
 Johnson, Caroline Elizabeth (Sleaford and North Hykeham)
 Johnson, Diana Ruth (Kingston upon Hull North)
 Johnson, Gareth Alan (Dartford)
 Johnson, Joseph Edmund (Orpington)
 Jones, Andrew Hanson (Harrogate and Knaresborough)
 Jones, Darren Paul (Bristol North West)
 Jones, Rt Hon. David Ian (Clwyd West)
 Jones, Gerald (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney)
 Jones, Graham Peter (Hyndburn)
 Jones, Helen Mary (Warrington North)
 Jones, Kevan David (North Durham)
 Jones, Marcus Charles (Nuneaton)
 Jones, Sarah (Croydon Central)
 Jones, Susan Elan (Clwyd South)

K

Kane, Michael Joseph Patrick (Wythenshawe and Sale East)
 Kawczynski, Daniel Robert (Shrewsbury and Atcham)
 Keegan, Gillian (Chichester)
 Keeley, Barbara Mary (Worsley and Eccles South)
 Kendall, Elizabeth Louise (Leicester West)

Kennedy, Seema Louise Ghiassi (South Ribble)
 Kerr, Stephen Charles (Stirling)
 Khan, Afzal Mohammed (Manchester, Gorton)
 Killen, Gerard (Rutherglen and Hamilton West)
 Kinnock, Stephen Nathan (Aberavon)
 Knight, Rt Hon. Gregory (East Yorkshire)
 Knight, Julian (Solihull)
 Kwarteng, Kwasi Alfred Addo (Spelthorne)
 Kyle, Peter John (Hove)

L

Laing, Eleanor Fulton (Epping Forest)
 Laird, Lesley (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath)
 Lake, Ben Morgan (Ceredigion)
 Lamb, Rt Hon. Norman Peter (North Norfolk)
 Lammy, Rt Hon. David Lindon (Tottenham)
 Lamont, John (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk)
 Lancaster, John Mark (Milton Keynes North)
 Latham, Pauline Elizabeth (Mid Derbyshire)
 Lavery, Ian (Wansbeck)
 Law, Christopher Murray Alexander (Dundee West)
 Leadsom, Rt Hon. Andrea (South Northamptonshire)
 Lee, Karen Elizabeth (Lincoln)
 Lee, Phillip James (Bracknell)
 Lefroy, Jeremy John Elton (Stafford)
 Leigh, Edward Julian Egerton (Gainsborough)
 Leslie, Christopher Michael (Nottingham East)
 Letwin, Rt Hon. Oliver (West Dorset)
 Lewell-Buck, Emma Louise (South Shields)
 Lewer, Andrew Iain (Northampton South)
 Lewis, Rt Hon. Brandon Kenneth (Great Yarmouth)
 Lewis, Clive Anthony (Norwich South)
 Lewis, Ivan (Bury South)
 Lewis, Rt Hon. Julian Murray (New Forest East)
 Liddell-Grainger, Ian Richard Peregrine (Bridgwater and West Somerset)
 Lidington, Rt Hon. David Roy (Aylesbury)
 Linden, David (Glasgow East)
 Little Pengelly, Emma (Belfast South)
 Lloyd, Anthony Joseph (Rochdale)
 Lloyd, Stephen (Eastbourne)
 Long Bailey, Rebecca (Salford and Eccles)
 Lopresti, Giacomo (Filton and Bradley Stoke)
 Lord, Jonathan George Caladine (Woking)
 Loughton, Timothy Paul (East Worthing and Shoreham)
 Lucas, Caroline Patricia (Brighton, Pavilion)
 Lucas, Ian Colin (Wrexham)
 Lynch, Holly Jamie (Halifax)

M

McCabe, Stephen James (Birmingham, Selly Oak)
 McCallion, Elisha (Foyle)
 McCarthy, Kerry Gillian (Bristol East)
 McDonagh, Siobhain Ann (Mitcham and Morden)
 McDonald, Andrew Joseph (Middlesbrough)
 McDonald, Stewart (Glasgow South)
 McDonald, Stuart Campbell (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East)
 McDonnell, Rt Hon. John Martin (Hayes and Harlington)
 McElduff, Barry (West Tyrone)
 McFadden, Rt Hon. Patrick Bosco (Wolverhampton South East)
 McGinn, Conor Patrick (St Helens North)
 McGovern, Alison (Wirral South)
 McInnes, Elizabeth Anne (Heywood and Middleton)
 MacKinlay, Craig (South Thanet)

McKinnell, Catherine (Newcastle upon Tyne North)
 Maclean, Rachel Helen (Redditch)
 McLoughlin, Rt Hon. Patrick Allen (Derbyshire Dales)
 McMahon, Jim (Oldham West and Royton)
 McMorris, Anna Rhiannon (Cardiff North)
 Mc Nally, John (Falkirk)
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar)
 McPartland, Stephen Anthony (Stevenage)
 McVey, Rt Hon. Esther (Tatton)
 Madders, Justin (Ellesmere Port and Neston)
 Mahmood, Khalid (Birmingham, Perry Barr)
 Mahmood, Shabana (Birmingham, Ladywood)
 Main, Anne Margaret (St Albans)
 Mak, Alan (Havant)
 Malhotra, Seema (Feltham and Heston)
 Malthouse, Christopher Laurie (North West Hampshire)
 Mann, John (Bassetlaw)
 Mann, Scott Leslie (North Cornwall)
 Marsden, Gordon (Blackpool South)
 Martin, Sandy (Ipswich)
 Maskell, Rachael Helen (York Central)
 Maskey, Paul John (Belfast West)
 Masterton, Paul (East Renfrewshire)
 Matheson, Chris (City of Chester)
 May, Rt Hon. Theresa Mary (Maidenhead)
 Maynard, Paul Christopher (Blackpool North and Cleveleys)
 Mearns, James Ian (Gateshead)
 Menzies, Mark Andrew (Fylde)
 Mercer, John Luther (Plymouth, Moor View)
 Merriman, Huw William (Bexhill and Battle)
 Metcalfe, Stephen James (South Basildon and East Thurrock)
 Miliband, Rt Hon. Ed (Doncaster North)
 Miller, Rt Hon. Maria Frances Lewis (Basingstoke)
 Milling, Amanda Anne (Cannock Chase)
 Mills, Nigel John (Amber Valley)
 Milton, Rt Hon. Anne Frances (Guildford)
 Mitchell, Rt Hon. Andrew John Bower (Sutton Coldfield)
 Molloy, Francis Joseph (Mid Ulster)
 Monaghan, Carol (Glasgow North West)
 Moon, Madeleine (Bridgend)
 Moore, Damien (Southport)
 Moran, Layla Michelle (Oxford West and Abingdon)
 Mordaunt, Penny Mary (Portsmouth North)
 Morden, Jessica Elizabeth (Newport East)
 Morgan, Rt Hon. Nicola Ann (Loughborough)
 Morgan, Stephen James (Portsmouth South)
 Morris, Anne Marie (Newton Abbot)
 Morris, David Thomas (Morecambe and Lunesdale)
 Morris, Grahame Mark (Easington)
 Morris, James George (Halesowen and Rowley Regis)
 Morton, Wendy (Aldridge-Brownhills)
 Mundell, Rt Hon. David Gordon (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale)
 Murray, Ian (Edinburgh South)
 Murray, Sheryll (South East Cornwall)
 Murrison, Andrew William (South West Wiltshire)

N

Nandy, Lisa Eva (Wigan)
 Neill, Robert James Macgillivray (Bromley and Chislehurst)
 Newlands, Gavin Andrew Stuart (Paisley and Renfrewshire North)
 Newton, Sarah (Truro and Falmouth)
 Nokes, Caroline Fiona Ellen (Romsey and Southampton North)

Norman, Alexander Jesse (Hereford and South Herefordshire)
Norris, Alex (Nottingham North)

O

O'Brien, Neil John (Harborough)
Offord, Matthew James (Hendon)
O'Hara, Brendan (Argyll and Bute)
O'Mara, Jared (Sheffield, Hallam)
Onasanya, Fiona Oluyinka (Peterborough)
Onn, Melanie (Great Grimsby)
Onwurah, Chi (Newcastle upon Tyne Central)
Opperman, Guy (Hexham)
Osamor, Kate Ofunne (Edmonton)
Owen, Albert (Ynys Môn)

P

Paisley, Ian Richard Kyle (North Antrim)
Parish, Neil Quentin Gordon (Tiverton and Honiton)
Patel, Rt Hon. Priti Sushil (Witham)
Paterson, Rt Hon. Owen William (North Shropshire)
Pawsey, Mark Julian Francis (Rugby)
Peacock, Stephanie Louise (Barnsley East)
Pearce, Teresa (Erith and Thamesmead)
Penning, Rt Hon. Michael Alan (Hemel Hempstead)
Pennycook, Matthew Thomas (Greenwich and Woolwich)
Penrose, John David (Weston-super-Mare)
Percy, Andrew Theakstone (Brigg and Goole)
Perkins, Matthew Toby (Chesterfield)
Perry, Claire Louise (Devizes)
Phillips, Jessica Rose (Birmingham, Yardley)
Phillipson, Bridget Maeve (Houghton and Sunderland South)
Philp, Chris Ian Brian Mynitt (Croydon South)
Pidcock, Laura (North West Durham)
Pincher, Christopher John (Tamworth)
Platt, Joanne Marie (Leigh)
Pollard, Luke (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport)
Poulter, Daniel Leonard James (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich)
Pound, Stephen Pelham (Ealing North)
Pow, Rebecca Faye (Taunton Deane)
Powell, Lucy Maria (Manchester Central)
Prentis, Victoria Mary Boswell (Banbury)
Prisk, Mark Michael (Hertford and Stortford)
Pritchard, Mark Andrew (The Wrekin)
Pursglove, Thomas Christopher John (Corby)

Q

Quin, Jeremy Mark (Horsham)
Quince, William James (Colchester)
Qureshi, Yasmin (Bolton South East)

R

Raab, Dominic Rennie (Esher and Walton)
Rashid, Faisal (Warrington South)
Rayner, Angela (Ashton-under-Lyne)
Redwood, Rt Hon. John Alan (Wokingham)
Reed, Steven Mark Ward (Croydon North)
Rees, Christina Elizabeth (Neath)
Rees-Mogg, Jacob William (North East Somerset)
Reeves, Ellie (Lewisham West and Penge)
Reeves, Rachel Jane (Leeds West)

Reynolds, Emma Elizabeth (Wolverhampton North East)
Reynolds, Jonathan Neil (Stalybridge and Hyde)
Rimmer, Marie Elizabeth (St Helens South and Whiston)
Robertson, Laurence Anthony (Tewkesbury)
Robinson, Gavin James (Belfast East)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Coventry North West)
Robinson, Mary Josephine (Cheadle)
Rodda, Matt (Reading East)
Rosindell, Andrew Richard (Romford)
Ross, Douglas (Moray)
Rowley, Danielle (Midlothian)
Rowley, Lee Benjamin (North East Derbyshire)
Ruane, Christopher Shaun (Vale of Clwyd)
Rudd, Rt Hon. Amber (Hastings and Rye)
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd (Brighton, Kemptown)
Rutley, David Henry (Macclesfield)
Ryan, Rt Hon. Joan Marie (Enfield North)

S

Sandbach, Antoinette (Eddisbury)
Saville Roberts, Liz (Dwyfor Meirionnydd)
Scully, Paul Stuart (Sutton and Cheam)
Seely, Bob (Isle of Wight)
Selous, Andrew Edmund Armstrong (South West Bedfordshire)
Shah, Naseem Akhter (Bradford West)
Shannon, Richard James (Strangford)
Shapps, Rt Hon. Grant (Welwyn Hatfield)
Sharma, Alok Kumar (Reading West)
Sharma, Virendra Kumar (Ealing, Southall)
Sheerman, Barry John (Huddersfield)
Shelbrooke, Alec (Elmet and Rothwell)
Sheppard, Thomas (Edinburgh East)
Sherriff, Paula Michelle (Dewsbury)
Shuker, Gavin (Luton South)
Siddiq, Tulip (Hampstead and Kilburn)
Simpson, Rt Hon. Keith Robert (Broadland)
Simpson, Thomas David (Upper Bann)
Skidmore, Christopher James (Kingswood)
Skinner, Dennis Edward (Bolsover)
Slaughter, Andrew Francis (Hammersmith)
Smeeth, Ruth Lauren (Stoke-on-Trent North)
Smith, Angela Christine (Penistone and Stocksbridge)
Smith, Catherine Jane (Lancaster and Fleetwood)
Smith, Chloe Rebecca (Norwich North)
Smith, Eleanor Patricia (Wolverhampton South West)
Smith, Henry Edward Millar (Crawley)
Smith, Jeffrey (Manchester, Withington)
Smith, Julian Richard (Skipton and Ripon)
Smith, Laura (Crewe and Nantwich)
Smith, Nicholas Desmond John (Blaenau Gwent)
Smith, Owen (Pontypridd)
Smith, Royston Matthew (Southampton, Itchen)
Smyth, Karin (Bristol South)
Snell, Gareth (Stoke-on-Trent Central)
Soames, Rt Hon. Nicholas (Mid Sussex)
Sobel, Alex (Leeds North West)
Soubry, Rt Hon. Anna Mary (Broxtowe)
Spellar, Rt Hon. John Francis (Warley)
Spelman, Rt Hon. Caroline (Meriden)
Spencer, Mark Steven (Sherwood)
Starmer, Keir (Holborn and St Pancras)
Stephens, Christopher (Glasgow South West)
Stephenson, Andrew George (Pendle)
Stevens, Joanna Meriel (Cardiff Central)
Stevenson, Andrew John (Carlisle)
Stewart, Iain Aitken (Milton Keynes South)

Stewart, Robert Alexander (Beckenham)
 Stewart, Roderick James Nugent (Penrith and The Border)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross)
 Streeter, Gary Nicholas (South West Devon)
 Streeting, Wesley Paul William (Ilford North)
 Stride, Rt Hon. Melvyn John (Central Devon)
 Stringer, Graham Eric (Blackley and Broughton)
 Stuart, Graham (Beverley and Holderness)
 Sturdy, Julian Charles (York Outer)
 Sunak, Rishi (Richmond (Yorks))
 Swayne, Rt Hon. Desmond Angus (New Forest West)
 Sweeney, Paul (Glasgow North East)
 Swinson, Jo (East Dunbartonshire)
 Swire, Rt Hon. Hugo George William (East Devon)
 Syms, Robert Andrew Raymond (Poole)

T

Tami, Mark Richard (Alyn and Deeside)
 Thewliss, Alison Emily (Glasgow Central)
 Thomas, Derek Gordon (St Ives)
 Thomas, Gareth (Harrow West)
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Z

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IN-HOUSE SERVICES

MANAGING DIRECTOR OF IN-HOUSE SERVICES—Carlos Bamford, MBE
 DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT—Della Herd
 BUSINESS RESILIENCE MANAGER—Georgina Gray
 BOARD SECRETARY AND EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Katie Phelan-Molloy

PARLIAMENTARY MAINTENANCE SERVICES

HEAD OF PARLIAMENTARY MAINTENANCE SERVICES—Mike McCann
 BUSINESS COMPLIANCE MANAGER—Martin Wittekind
 OPERATIONS MANAGER—Phil Sturgeon
 REACTIVE AND CEREMONIAL MAINTENANCE MANAGER—Steve Jaggs
 SMALL WORKS MAINTENANCE MANAGER—Len Thorogood
 CONTRACTS MANAGER—John Taylor
 FIRE SAFETY MANAGER—John Bradbury

CATERING SERVICES

DIRECTOR OF CATERING SERVICES—Richard Tapner-Evans, BSc
 EXECUTIVE CHEF—Mark Hill
 OPERATIONS MANAGER—Robert Gibbs
 CATERING MANAGER (TERRACE CAFETERIA, MEMBERS' TEA ROOM AND JUBILEE CAFÉ)—Denise Durkin
 PRIVATE DINING AND EVENTS MANAGER—Lee Holt
 PRIVATE DINING AND EVENTS OFFICE MANAGER—Jason Bonello
 PRIVATE DINING AND EVENTS SALES MANAGER—Kay West
 CATERING SERVICES MANAGER, NORTHERN ESTATE (PORTCULLIS HOUSE, 1 Parliament Street, 7 MILLBANK, MONCRIEFF'S AND Tothill Street)—Yvonne Sparrow
 CATERING MANAGER, (PORTCULLIS HOUSE, 7 MILLBANK, 1 Parliament Street AND MONCRIEFF'S PRESS COMPLEX AND Tothill Street)—James Ellis
 ASSISTANT CATERING MANAGER (PORTCULLIS HOUSE, 7 MILLBANK, 1 PARLIAMENT STREET MONCRIEFF'S AND TOTHILL STREET)—Katie Elliott
 PARLIAMENTARY CATERING SUPPLY MANAGER—Antony Avella
 MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—Tanith Banks

ACCOMMODATION AND LOGISTICS SERVICES

DIRECTOR OF ACCOMMODATION AND LOGISTICS SERVICES—Fiona Channon
 PARLIAMENTARY LOGISTICS MANAGER—Wesley Auvache
 MEMBERS' ACCOMMODATION MANAGER—Lis Gerhold
 ACCOMMODATION MANAGER—Susanna Lumsden
 DEPUTY ACCOMMODATION MANAGER—Dawn Brown
 ASSISTANT ACCOMMODATION MANAGER (DIVERSITY & INCLUSION LEAD)—Stephen Furber
 HEAD OF SERVICE DELIVERY—Brendon Mulvihill
 SERVICE DELIVERY MANAGERS—Doreen Irving, Noel Kirby, Simon Mansfield, David O'Nions, Les Stockwell
 HERITAGE CLEANING MANAGER—Eliza Steffens
 POSTMASTER—Mark Morrish

SERJEANT AT ARMS

SERJEANT AT ARMS—Kamal El-Hajji BEM
 CLERK IN CHARGE—Laura Blake
 ADMISSION ORDER OFFICE—Sarah Dinsdale
 PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—Phil Howse
 ACCESS MANAGER—Emily Cathcart

CURATOR'S OFFICE & HISTORIC COLLECTIONS TEAM

CURATOR OF WORKS OF ART—Malcolm Hay
 DEPUTY CURATOR AND HEAD OF INTERPRETATION—Melanie Unwin
 ASSISTANT CURATOR—Emma Gormley
 COLLECTIONS CARE MANAGER—Caroline Babington
 COLLECTIONS INFORMATION MANAGER—Therese Crawley
 REGISTRAR—Emily Green
 KEEPER OF HISTORIC COLLECTIONS—Mary-Jane Tsang
 HISTORIC COLLECTIONS MANAGER—Emma Traherne
 CONSERVATION MANAGER—Patrick Walsh

RESEARCH AND INFORMATION

HOUSE OF COMMONS LIBRARIAN AND MANAGING DIRECTOR—Penny Young
 PERSONAL ASSISTANT—Brigitte Onyskiw
 HEAD OF TEAM SERVICES—John Owen

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT DIRECTORATE

DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT—Steve Wise
 HEAD OF INDEXING AND DATA MANAGEMENT—Anya Somerville
 HEAD OF LIBRARY RESOURCES—Susannah Foulis
 SPIRE BENEFITS REALISATION MANAGER—Anne Thompson

INFORMATION RIGHTS AND INFORMATION SECURITY SERVICE (IRIS)

HEAD OF IRIS—Victoria Payne

PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (POST)

ACTING DIRECTOR OF POST—Dr Chandrika Nath
 ADVISERS—Dr Peter Border, Dr Sara Bunn, Dr Lydia Harriss, Dr Abbi Hobbs, Dr Caroline Kenny, Jack Miller,
 Dr Jonathan Wentworth

Research & Information Directorate—

DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH—Edward Wood

Business and Transport—

HEAD OF SECTION—Tim Edmonds
 LIBRARY CLERKS—Louise Butcher, Douglas Pyper, Antony Seely, Djuna Thurley

Economic Policy and Statistics—

HEAD OF SECTION—Lorna Booth
 LIBRARY CLERKS—Philip Brien, Daniel Harari, Matthew Keep, Feargal McGuinness, Federico Mor, Andrew Powell, Dominic Webb

Home Affairs—

HEAD OF SECTION—Pat Strickland
 LIBRARY CLERKS—Jacqui Beard, Lorraine Conway, Jack Dent, Catherine Fairbairn, Samantha Godec, Sally Lipscombe, Terry McGuinness, John Woodhouse

International Affairs and Defence —

HEAD OF SECTION—Vaughne Miller
 LIBRARY CLERKS—Louisa Brooke-Holland, John Curtis, Arabella Lang, Jon Lunn, Claire Mills, Ben Smith

Parliament and Constitution Centre—

ACTING HEAD OF SECTION—Emma Downing
 LIBRARY CLERKS—Gail Bartlett, Dr Paul Bowers, Neil Johnston, Richard Kelly, Mark Sandford, Dr Jack Simson Caird

Science and Environment—

HEAD OF SECTION—Ed Potton
 LIBRARY CLERKS—Dr Elena Ares, Dr Sarah Barber, Gabrielle Garton Grimwood, David Hirst, Sara Priestley, Louise Smith,

Social and General Statistics—

HEAD OF SECTION—Richard Cracknell

LIBRARY CLERKS—Grahame Allen, Dr Carl Baker, Cassie Barton, Paul Bolton, Dr Rachael Harker, Oliver Hawkins, Richard Keen, Tom Rutherford, Dr Elise Uberoi

Social Policy—

HEAD OF SECTION—Wendy Wilson

LIBRARY CLERKS—Alex Bate, Hannah Cromarty, David Foster, Susan Hubble, Tim Jarrett, Steven Kennedy, Robert Long, Tom Powell, Nerys Roberts

RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE

DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT—Bryn Morgan

HEAD OF CUSTOMER SERVICE, HOUSE OF COMMONS LIBRARY—Hannah Roberts

HEAD OF RESEARCH COMMUNICATIONS—Grace Rowley

HEAD OF OPERATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT, HOUSE OF COMMONS LIBRARY—Hannah RUSSELL

HEAD OF RESEARCH INFORMATION SERVICE—David Beales

HEAD OF EVALUATION AND INSIGHT—Clare Bamberger

FRONT OF HOUSE MANAGER, HOUSE OF COMMONS LIBRARY—Amina Gual

STRATEGIC ESTATES

MANAGING DIRECTOR—Brian Finnimore

DIRECTOR PROJECT DELIVERY—Victor Akinbile BSc., MRICS

DIRECTOR PROPERTY, PLANNING & DESIGN—Donald Grant CEng

DIRECTOR PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT OFFICE—Jonathan Lewsey BA (Hons)

RESTORATION AND RENEWAL PROGRAMME DIRECTOR—Tom Healey

NORTHERN ESTATE PROGRAMME DIRECTOR (INTERIM)—John Cryer

LEAD ELECTRICAL ENGINEER (BUILDING SERVICES)—Ugbana Oyet BEng (Hons) CEng MIET

LEAD CONTROLS/COMMUNICATIONS ENGINEER—Allan Trendell

LEAD MECHANICAL ENGINEER—Andy Greaves

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR—Jo Regan

HEAD OF BUSINESS SUPPORT—Ann Moghaddami

HEAD OF PROGRAMME & PLANNING—Andrew Geehan MSc, BSc, BD

HEAD OF ARCHITECTURE AND HERITAGE—Adam Watrobski, BA (Hons), DiplArch, DiplConsAA, RIBA

HEAD OF PROPERTY AND WORK SPACE—Helen Arkell, BSc (Hons), MRICS

ESTATES ARCHIVIST AND HISTORIAN—Dr Mark Collins, BA, PhD

PARLIAMENTARY DIGITAL SERVICE

DIRECTOR OF PARLIAMENTARY DIGITAL SERVICE—Rob Greig

DEPUTY DIRECTOR—Tracey Jessup

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER (INTERIM)—David Smith

DIGITAL PORTFOLIO DIRECTOR—Rebecca Elton

DIRECTOR OF THE CYBER SECURITY PROGRAMME—Steven Mark

DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT—Emma Allen

DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION—Tori Baker

DIRECTOR OF LIVE SERVICES—Rob Sanders

HEAD OF CYBER SECURITY—Mark Harbord

HEAD OF MEMBER SERVICES—Graham Peek

OTHER PRINCIPAL OFFICERS

CLERK OF THE CROWN IN CHANCERY—Richard Heaton

COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL—Amyas Morse

PARLIAMENTARY AND HEALTH SERVICE OMBUDSMAN—Rob Behrens

House of Commons

Wednesday 21 June 2017

*The House met at twenty-five minutes past
Eleven o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGE TO ATTEND HER MAJESTY

*Message to attend Her Majesty delivered by the Gentleman
Usher of the Black Rod.*

*The Speaker, with the House, went up to attend Her Majesty;
on their return, the Speaker suspended the sitting.*

Members Sworn

1.45 pm

*The following Members took and subscribed the Oath,
or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by law:*

Right honourable Sir Michael Fallon, *for* Sevenoaks
Right honourable Keith Robert Simpson, Broadland
Gary Nicholas Streeter, South West Devon
Stephen Daniel Double, St Austell and Newquay
Right honourable Gregory William Hands, Chelsea
and Fulham
Pauline Elizabeth Latham, Mid Derbyshire
Matthew James Offord, Hendon
Gavin Shuker, Luton South
Paula Michelle Sherriff, Dewsbury
Melanie Onn, Great Grimsby
Yasmin Qureshi, Bolton South East
Stephen James McCabe, Birmingham, Selly Oak
David Arthur Stephen Tredinnick, Bosworth
Andrew John Stevenson, Carlisle
Thomas Anthony Watson, West Bromwich East
Albert Owen, Ynys Môn
Graham Peter Jones, Hyndburn
John Zak Woodcock, Barrow and Furness
James Philip Duddridge, Rochford and Southend East
Michael Louis David Fabricant, Lichfield
Anne Marie Morris, Newton Abbot
Derek Thomas, St Ives
Siobhain Ann McDonagh, Mitcham and Morden
Joanne Kate Swinson, East Dunbartonshire
Bernard Christison Jenkin, Harwich and North Essex
Jacob William Rees-Mogg, North East Somerset
Emma Dent Coad, Kensington
Ann Coffey, Stockport
Michael Whitney Freer, Finchley and Golders Green
Huw William Merriman, Bexhill and Battle
Kerry Gillian McCarthy, Bristol East

Guto ap Owain Bebb, Aberconwy
Tulip Rizwana Siddiq, Hampstead and Kilburn
Gregory Lloyd Campbell, East Londonderry
Anna Catherine Turley, Redcar
Right honourable Anna Mary Soubry, Broxtowe
Sarah Deborah Champion, Rotherham
Claire Louise Perry, Devizes
Richard Grosvenor Drax, South Dorset
Richard James Shannon, Strangford
James Stephen Heapey, Wells
Adam Afriyie, Windsor
Helen Grant, Maidstone and The Weald

2.11 pm

Sitting suspended.

Speaker's Statement

2.30 pm

Mr Speaker: Colleagues, let us begin by standing for a minute of silence as we remember the terrible events that have occurred in Manchester, and at London Bridge, Grenfell Tower and Finsbury Park.

The House observed a minute's silence.

Mr Speaker: The House has directed the Speaker to make a statement at the beginning of each Session about the duties and responsibilities of Members of this House.

I begin by reminding Members of our duty to observe the code of conduct agreed by the House, and to behave with civility and fairness in all their dealings. In our proceedings, every Member should be heard courteously, whatever their views. The House asserts its privilege of freedom of speech so that we can represent our constituents without fear or favour. We must exercise that privilege responsibly. It applies only to our work in this House; as private individuals we are equal under the law with those whom we represent.

Parliament must be open to those whom it represents, and we must continue to make our constituents welcome here. The security of this building and of those who work and visit here depends upon all of us. We have a duty to be vigilant, and to assist those whose job it is to maintain this place as a safe place to work. I ask you all to wear your passes wherever you are on the parliamentary estate, and I remind you that you should not use your mobile phones or any other device to film or take photographs in or around the Chamber.

Before moving to the first business of the new Parliament, I would like to express my very best wishes for the forthcoming Session to all Members—both new and returning—and all those who work here. I also send best wishes to those former Members not returned at the election, and thank them for their service to this House and to our democratic process—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Finally, I remind Members that the coat of arms of our departed friend and colleague, Jo Cox, will be unveiled this Saturday, 24 June. If you would like to attend and have not yet so indicated, please get in touch with my office.

OUTLAWRIES BILL

A Bill for the more effectual preventing Clandestine Outlawries was read the First time, and ordered to be read a Second time.

Deputy Speakers

Ordered,

That the Speaker may nominate no more than three Members as Deputy Speakers to serve until the House has elected Deputy Speakers in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 2A; and that the Members so nominated shall exercise all the powers vested in the Chairman of Ways and Means as Deputy Speaker.—(*Andrea Leadsom.*)

Queen's Speech

Mr Speaker: I have to acquaint the House, that this House has this day attended Her Majesty in the House of Peers, and that Her Majesty was pleased to make a most gracious speech from the Throne to both Houses of Parliament, of which I have, for greater accuracy, obtained a copy. I shall direct that the terms of the speech be printed in the *Votes and Proceedings*. Copies are available in the Vote Office.

The Gracious Speech was as follows:

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

My Government's priority is to secure the best possible deal as the country leaves the European Union. My Ministers are committed to working with Parliament, the devolved administrations, business and others to build the widest possible consensus on the country's future outside the European Union.

A bill will be introduced to repeal the European Communities Act and provide certainty for individuals and businesses. This will be complemented by legislation to ensure that the United Kingdom makes a success of Brexit, establishing new national policies on immigration, international sanctions, nuclear safeguards, agriculture, and fisheries.

My Government will seek to maintain a deep and special partnership with European allies and to forge new trading relationships across the globe. New bills on trade and customs will help to implement an independent trade policy, and support will be given to help British businesses export to markets around the world.

My Ministers will strengthen the economy so that it supports the creation of jobs and generates the tax revenues needed to invest in the National Health Service, schools, and other public services.

My Government will continue to improve the public finances, while keeping taxes low. It will spread prosperity and opportunity across the country through a new modern, industrial strategy.

My Government will work to attract investment in infrastructure to support economic growth. Legislation will be introduced to ensure the United Kingdom remains a world leader in new industries, including electric cars and commercial satellites. A new bill will also be brought forward to deliver the next phase of high-speed rail.

My Government will continue to work to ensure that every child has the opportunity to attend a good school and that all schools are fairly funded. My Ministers will work to ensure people have the skills they need for the high-skilled, high-wage jobs of the future, including through a major reform of technical education.

The National Living Wage will be increased so that people who are on the lowest pay benefit from the same improvements in earnings as higher paid workers. My Ministers will seek to enhance rights and protections in the modern workplace.

My Government will make further progress to tackle the gender pay gap and discrimination against people on the basis of their race, faith, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

Legislation will be brought forward to protect the victims of domestic violence and abuse.

My Government will reform mental health legislation and ensure that mental health is prioritised in the National Health Service in England.

Proposals will be brought forward to ban unfair tenant fees, promote fairness and transparency in the housing market, and help ensure more homes are built.

My Ministers will work to improve social care and will bring forward proposals for consultation.

My Government will ensure fairer markets for consumers, this will include bringing forward measures to help tackle unfair practices in the energy market to help reduce energy bills.

A priority will be to build a more united country, strengthening the social, economic and cultural bonds between England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

My Government will work in cooperation with the devolved administrations, and it will work with all of the parties in Northern Ireland to support the return of devolved government.

A new law will ensure that the United Kingdom retains its world-class regime protecting personal data, and proposals for a new digital charter will be brought forward to ensure that the United Kingdom is the safest place to be online.

Legislation will also be introduced to modernise the courts system and to help reduce motor insurance premiums.

My Government will initiate a full public inquiry into the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower to ascertain the causes, and ensure that the appropriate lessons are learnt.

To support victims, my Government will take forward measures to introduce an independent public advocate, who will act for bereaved families after a public disaster and support them at public inquests.

My Ministers will continue to invest in our gallant Armed Forces, meeting the NATO commitment to spend at least two per cent of national income on defence, and delivering on the Armed Forces Covenant across the United Kingdom.

My Government will bring forward proposals to ensure that critical national infrastructure is protected to safeguard national security.

A commission for countering extremism will be established to support the Government in stamping out extremist ideology in all its forms, both across society and on the internet, so it is denied a safe space to spread.

In the light of the terrorist attacks in Manchester and London, my Government's counter-terrorism strategy will be reviewed to ensure that the police and security services have all the powers they need, and that the length of custodial sentences for terrorism-related offences are sufficient to keep the population safe.

My Ministers will ensure that the United Kingdom's leading role on the world stage is maintained and enhanced as it leaves the European Union.

As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, committed to spending zero point seven per cent of national income on international development, my Government will continue to drive international efforts that increase global security and project British values around the world.

My Government will work to find sustainable political solutions to conflicts across the Middle East. It will work to tackle the threat of terrorism at source by continuing the United Kingdom's leading role in international military action to destroy Daesh in Iraq and Syria. It will also lead efforts to reform the international system to improve the United Kingdom's ability to tackle mass migration, alleviate poverty, and end modern slavery.

My Government will continue to support international action against climate change, including the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Prince Philip and I look forward to welcoming Their Majesties King Felipe and Queen Letizia of Spain on a State Visit in July.

My Government will host the Commonwealth Summit in April of next year to cement its relevance to this, and future generations.

Members of the House of Commons

Estimates for the public services will be laid before you.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

Other measures will be laid before you.

I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels.

Debate on the Address

[1ST DAY]

Mr Speaker: Before I call the mover and seconder, I want to announce the proposed pattern of debate during the remaining days on the Loyal Address: Thursday 22 June—housing and social security; Monday 26 June—Brexit and foreign affairs; Tuesday 27 June—education and local services; Wednesday 28 June—health, social care and security; Thursday 29 June—economy and jobs.

2.36 pm

Richard Benyon (Newbury) (Con): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

It is an honour to have been asked to move the Loyal Address, but it is first important to recognise that we meet in the shadow of some of the most terrible tragedies of modern times. Nothing we say can undo what has happened in north Kensington or, for that matter, on the streets of London or Manchester. What we in this House can do is to join our sovereign in leading the nation in mourning the dead, caring for the injured and the bereaved, and uniting in an absolute determination to prevent any such tragedies and outrages from happening again.

Our tone in this debate and debates in the coming days and weeks must reflect the nation's horror and sadness at such awful tragedies. The country expects our debates and arguments to be robust, but there is room for consensus too. At times like this, we should reflect on Jo Cox's words about there being more that unites us than divides us.

I am not the first Richard Benyon to have been asked to move the Loyal Address. My great-great-grandfather was the MP for Berkshire between 1860 and 1876. Although he was a great man in many ways, there is no record of him ever troubling *Hansard* with any speech, even a maiden speech. He was asked by Disraeli to move the Loyal Address in 1869, but replied that, though mindful of the honour, as a matter of principle he never spoke in Parliament. As you know, Mr Speaker, my father was one of your predecessors as the Member for Buckingham. He told that story to Speaker Thomas, who clasped a hand to his head and said, "How I wish there were more like him in the House today."

I still think of myself as young, but being asked to do this singular honour reminds me that I am, as golfers put it, on the back nine. In the election that we have all just endured or enjoyed—whatever our perspective—I faced a Labour candidate who was born a year after I was selected to fight the seat I now hold. Teams of therapists will be needed to help me to overcome the brutal reality that I have gone straight from being young thruster to old codger, with nothing in between.

I wrestled the Newbury constituency from the Liberal Democrats at the third attempt. I want it on the record that in doing so, I reduced the number of Members of

this House who were educated at Eton by one. That may be why some Opposition Members consider me to be something of a working-class hero. [*Laughter.*] The Newbury constituency is no stranger to controversy. Greenham Common and the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston have made it a regular tourist destination for the Leader of the Opposition, among others. He will be pleased that one particular sword has been beaten into a ploughshare: the runway at the now decommissioned Greenham Common airbase was taken up and crushed to form Newbury's new and infamous bypass.

The only other Member for Newbury to have moved the Loyal Address was William Mount in 1905. A year later, he lost his seat, due to a combination of negative campaigning by the Liberal candidate—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame!"] I know that that is hard to imagine in this day and age—and, crucially, his not being a champion of free trade, the latter a fact not lost on a particular champion of free trade: his great-grandson, David Cameron.

The area I now represent is by all measures a prosperous area—someone once said to me that deprivation in West Berkshire is when Waitrose runs out of balsamic vinegar; they were totally wrong—but we all know, in all our constituencies, areas of need, although not on the scale of deprivation and poverty that I witnessed in my years as a soldier in Belfast in my early 20s. That memory still has a great impact on my political beliefs today. In all constituencies there are areas of humanity that have missed out on the prosperity of the fifth largest economy in the world. A rising tide of economic prosperity should lift all boats in the harbour, but that is not happening everywhere. This Queen's Speech has at its heart the words of the Prime Minister on the steps of No. 10 a year ago, when she spoke of social justice and equality of opportunity.

The part of England that I represent combines so much of what makes me positive about Britain's future. Sitting alongside some of the most breathtaking countryside exists an economy of extraordinary excitement and dynamism. In 1985, a small group of people started working on mobile telecommunications in a one-room office above a curry restaurant in Newbury. That company, Vodafone—still based in Newbury—employs 108,000 people worldwide and is worth £59 billion. West Berkshire remains one of the most exciting places to start or grow a business. It attracts companies and investment from around the world, and it is a model for the kind of outward-looking, engaged, modern society that works for Britain today.

Businesses are not just entities or institutions separate from real lives; they are first and foremost about the people who work in them and those families who in turn depend on them. As we tackle the big challenge of this Parliament, let us remember what really matters to our constituents. Too often, this place, and those who report on it, are obsessed with the politics of Brexit; our constituents are concerned with the realities of Brexit. That means the reality for the companies in West Berkshire, and in all our constituencies, that are part of a new generation of creative entrepreneurs in manufacturing, tech, life sciences and the service sector. They need to be able to sell their goods, services and expertise in Europe and around the world, and they need to be able to recruit the best people to keep them competitive.

Like the majority in my constituency, I voted to remain in the EU, but, like the majority of people I represent and most people in this House, I recognise the result of the referendum.

I want to be positive about the future. I want to look back at this time and say that I was part of a Parliament that rose to the challenge and, with a great unity of purpose, helped to ensure that Britain successfully reset its relationship with its European neighbours, successfully negotiated access to key markets for its businesses and, while controlling immigration, still allowed people to come to Britain to study and to contribute to our economy and our society. The referendum was in part about parliamentary sovereignty, so we in Parliament can reflect that by immersing ourselves in the detail of what we can all agree is a great national endeavour.

Let our eyes be not only on Europe. As the United States takes a particular route on the environment and climate change, we should grasp the opportunity to ensure that the UK becomes the leader in clean tech, green innovation and resource efficiency. I welcome, for example, legislation announced in this speech that will promote the development of electric vehicles. This will ensure that we build the cars of the future, maintain our strength in motor manufacturing and make our towns and cities better places in which to live and work.

At times, the problems we face seem massive and there are times when we might let ourselves think that it is all too difficult. Just when all seems bleak, we as Members of Parliament have a means of keeping ourselves grounded in the realities of life. In our constituencies, we can visit a charity, a school or a business that inspires us. We can have a quiet conversation, as I had recently, with a veteran coping with life-changing injuries. These experiences lift our eyes to the extraordinary humanity and strength that exists in this country, never more so than in these most sombre times.

It is the quiet but determined doers—whether they are individuals, in our public services, in industry or in voluntary organisations—whom we meet almost daily who make me optimistic for Britain's future. Twenty-seven years ago, John Major spoke of his desire to build a nation at ease with itself. It was a phrase that resonated with me. A nation at ease with itself would present its population with the same opportunities whatever part of the country or whatever background they came from. Such a society would enjoy greater prosperity, its citizens would enjoy longer and more satisfied lives, and inequality between the richest and the poorest would be narrowing. By every independently produced statistic, we live at, or at the threshold of, such a time.

Those measured indicators are steadily, if too slowly, being achieved, but none of us can claim that our United Kingdom is a nation at ease with itself. Last year's referendum and the recent election have shown that divisions remain wide and potentially harmful. The Gracious Speech holds firm to the Prime Minister's deeply held belief in having an economy and society that work for everyone. These are values that matter to her, they matter to me and I know that they matter to every single Member of this House.

Those we represent deserve to live in a country at ease with itself and with the world. I commend the motion to the House.

2.48 pm

Kwasi Kwarteng (Spelthorne) (Con): Before I proceed, I want to declare an interest: I have ransacked my family vaults and found no letter from Mr Benjamin Disraeli to my great-grandfather or any other member of my family.

It is a great honour to be invited to second this Humble Address, which was moved so eloquently by my right hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Richard Benyon). He was both charming and funny, and that is a much rarer quality than you would expect, Mr Speaker.

It is wonderful to see everything in its place. We have you, Mr Speaker; we have the Government—[*Interruption*]—we have a Government; we have the Leader of the Opposition in his place. All is well with the world. I am even delighted to see our old, special friends the Liberal Democrats in their place, still brimming with enthusiasm—albeit without a leader, but we can live with that for a while.

Election day, as we all know, was full of surprises. When the exit poll was revealed there were gasps of anguish, despair and deep, bitter disappointment—and that was only the members of the parliamentary Labour party. We all know how hard the business of putting together a Government has been. We know how tortuous the process has been—the debates, tensions, and difficulties—and we could follow every detail closely in the highly objective, scrupulously fair pages of the *Evening Standard*.

It is a great privilege for me, the son of Ghanaian immigrants who came to this country in the 1960s, to perform this duty today. My mother lived in Liverpool, where her elder brother was studying medicine. She remembers Sir Winston Churchill's funeral and Liverpool winning the FA cup. She certainly would never have believed that her only son would become a British Member of Parliament. That is one of the strengths of this country.

I know that people are wondering, as the custom is for this speech to be delivered by a young, thrusting MP. After seven years in the House I was slightly confused about that description. One of my hon. Friends, a former Whip, said, "Oh, you're meant to be the young one, are you?" In my intake of 2010, I have seen such meteoric high fliers as a Business Secretary, a Home Secretary, and even a Lord Chancellor. Then there is me. May I reassure Members, and may I reassure the Prime Minister, that I am still young, still thrusting.

This occasion is also a great honour for my constituency, Spelthorne, but as MPs, we can all reflect that politics is not all about set-piece occasions and big speeches. When first I walked down the high street in Ashford, I wondered how I would be treated. An elderly woman came up to me, and said, rather surprisingly, "Mr Kwarteng, I am going to vote for you." Then I made the fatal mistake. I asked the question no candidate should ever ask. "Why?" "Oh, I don't know," she said. "I like seeing your smiley face in the newspaper." We must never attempt to second-guess at every stage our voters' motivations.

The borough I have the honour to represent has many political and historic associations. Staines, of course, was where the barons assembled before forcing King John to sign Magna Carta in Runnymede. It was in Staines that Sir Thomas More, one of your less fortunate predecessors, Mr Speaker, was tried, before his execution on Tower Hill—may you avert that fate.

[Kwasi Kwarteng]

One of my recent predecessors, Sir Humphrey Atkins, was Chief Whip, then Northern Ireland Secretary in turbulent times.

These days, my constituency is very much a place of business, with a range of enterprises, from small start-ups to global companies such as Shepperton Studios and BP. Spelthorne has a thriving business community, which of course is greatly helped by our location, with excellent links to London and Heathrow airport. There is also a great innovative spirit in my constituency; as recently as 2015, a study concluded that Staines-upon-Thames was the No.1 town in the country in which to start a new business, with three times as many start-ups every year as the UK average.

Despite changes in the way we do business and the technology that we use, the traditions of the House have withstood the onslaught of time. You, Mr Speaker, uphold the great traditions of this House and our parliamentary system. These institutions have evolved, and they remain—I wondered how I could put this; I was at a loss for words and was thinking of a phrase. Of course: “strong and stable”.

I am delighted that the Government’s programme is ambitious. We have Brexit, and when we look at the great repeal Bill, we have to consider what a great and significant piece of legislation it will be. The original European Communities Act was passed in 1972. Feelings were so strong at that time that it took 300 hours of parliamentary debate before the Bill was passed. Feelings are no less strong today, because the future of the country is at stake. The complexities of the great repeal Bill will be debated extensively in the next two years. It will be a great landmark in the parliamentary and constitutional history of this country. A new Immigration Bill will seek, rightly, to reduce migration to sustainable levels. Once passed, both these Acts will shape Britain very considerably in the years ahead.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker—[HON. MEMBERS: “MORE!”] The last few months have been, by any standards, horrific. I never thought I would live to see barriers erected on Westminster bridge. The attacks on innocent people—even within the parliamentary estate or, most recently, at the Finsbury Park mosque—have rightly disgusted the overwhelming majority of decent people in this country. Neither did I think that I would see a tower, with 500 people sleeping in their homes, go up in flames. The appalling scenes of devastation in west London last week can never be forgotten.

We can talk of tradition and history, but at a time like the present we must be mindful of human suffering. It is at times like last week that we in this House are reminded of the solemn duties and grave responsibilities that we have been called on by our constituents, and the whole country, to discharge. The recent terrible events remind us of the awe-inspiring trust with which we have been endowed. It is in this rather sombre and reflective mood that I commend the Gracious Speech to the House.

2.58 pm

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): By tradition, at the beginning of each parliamentary Session we commemorate the Members we have lost in the previous year. Sadly, this year must also mark the passing of those we have lost in horrific events in recent days and weeks.

The fire at Grenfell Tower in west London has killed at least 79 people. What makes it both a tragedy and an outrage is that every single one of those deaths could have been avoided. Something has gone horrifically wrong. The north Kensington community is demanding answers, and it is entitled to those answers. Thousands of people living in tower blocks around the country need urgent reassurance, and the emergency services—especially, in this case, the fire and rescue services—deserve our deepest respect and support.

I also want to pay a very warm tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Emma Dent Coad), who in recent days has demonstrated so clearly why her local community put their faith in her. Her determination to ensure that every family is rehoused locally is an exemplary work of a dedicated Member of Parliament, and we welcome her to this House. Lessons must be learned in the public inquiry, and a disaster that never should have happened must never happen again.

The terrorist attacks in Manchester, London Bridge and Finsbury Park took innocent lives, causing dozens of injuries, and traumatised hundreds of people, with wilful and callous disregard for human life. The attack in the early hours of Monday morning in my own constituency is a reminder to us all that hate has no creed, that violence has no religion, and that we must stand up to hatred—whoever the target—and stand together against those who would drive us apart. Last night, hundreds of people assembled alongside Finsbury Park mosque to give just that message—from all communities and all faiths.

Our communities and our country are strongest when we are united. As our late colleague Jo Cox said, “we...have far more in common than that which divides us.”—[*Official Report*, 3 June 2015; Vol. 596, c. 675.]

It is just over a year ago that Jo was taken from us by someone driven by hatred. Jo was driven by love and by an infectious energy. It was in the spirit of that energy and passion for people, life and justice that so many events were held in her memory around the country last weekend, including one in Muslim Welfare House in my constituency, near the site of the vile attack that happened a day later. They held a great get-together at the weekend. We should remember Jo and thank her, and make sure these great get-together events do continue year in, year out to unite our local communities.

Earlier this year, we also lost the Father of the House, Sir Gerald Kaufman, who had served his constituents for nearly 47 years, and previously worked for Harold Wilson in Downing Street. Gerald was an iconic and irascible figure in the Labour party. He came from a proud Jewish background and campaigned to bring peace to the middle east throughout his life. It was my pleasure to travel with him in that quest to many countries in the region, and I loved the very many lengthy conversations I had with him—in fact, nobody ever had a short conversation with Sir Gerald. Gerald and Jo will be fondly remembered by all who knew them and worked with them.

I want to congratulate the mover and the seconder of the Queen’s Speech. First, I congratulate the right hon. Member for Newbury (Richard Benyon) on his speech. My mother told me of the joy of Greenham common—she was there, and I went to visit her—and I hope that he will understand the deep love of humanity that motivated all those women and others to go to Greenham common during those days.

I would like to thank the right hon. Gentleman for taking time out from his considerable responsibilities—looking after his extensive property portfolio and tending to his directorship of UK Water Partnership. I hope a Labour Government may soon be able to come to the aid of his Newbury constituents by taking water back into public ownership, and to the aid of his tenants by ensuring there is a responsibility on landlords to ensure that all homes are fit for human habitation.

I know the right hon. Gentleman will also continue diligently to pursue his other interests in Parliament—his interests in defence, Africa and rural affairs. I do agree with part of what he said, when he spoke of the need for us as a country to adhere to all the agreements on climate change issues around the world, and I thank him for that part of his speech.

I turn now to the seconder of today's Loyal Address, the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Kwasi Kwarteng), whose speech was typically articulate and very erudite—after all, he is a former winner of “University Challenge”, so he would be able to make such a speech. He mentioned Benjamin Disraeli, and I welcome that, because Benjamin Disraeli once said, “If I want to read a book, I write one.” It seems that the hon. Gentleman has taken that maxim to new levels, writing or co-writing six books during the seven years he has been a Member of this House. I have been looking through the back catalogue of his books, and one book absolutely stands out—it is a must-read. It is absolutely apposite to our times, and I hope it is reprinted. It came out in 2011, and it was called “After the Coalition”. I do not want to cut across any of his present literary representations, but perhaps a sequel may be in the offing—although I understand that the latest coalition may already be in some chaos.

Nothing could emphasise that chaos more than the Queen's Speech we have just heard: a threadbare legislative programme from a Government who have lost their majority and apparently run out of ideas altogether. This would be a thin legislative programme even if it was for one year, but for two years—two years? There is not enough in it to fill up one year.

It is therefore appropriate to start by welcoming what is not in the speech. First, there is no mention of scrapping the winter fuel allowance for millions of pensioners through means-testing. Can the Prime Minister assure us that that Conservative plan has now been withdrawn? Mercifully, neither is there any mention of ditching the triple lock. Pensioners across Britain will be grateful to know whether the Tory election commitment on that has also been binned.

Older people and their families might also be keen for some clarity around the Government's policy on social care—whether it is still what was originally set out in the Conservative manifesto, whether it is what it was later amended to, or whether it is now something else entirely. I am sure it is just a matter of historical record, but on looking at the Conservative website today, the manifesto has been taken down in its entirety. It apparently no longer exists. The Prime Minister might also like to confirm that food is not, after all, going to be taken from the mouths of infants and that younger primary school children will continue to receive universal free school meals. On the subject of schools, there was nothing about grammar schools in the Gracious Speech. Does the Prime Minister now agree with her predecessor that “it is delusional to think that a policy of expanding”

the

“number of grammar schools is either a good idea, a sellable idea or even the right idea”?

The good news may even extend to our furry friends, if the Prime Minister can guarantee that the barbaric practice of foxhunting will remain banned in this country.

The Government have recently embarked on what are likely to be very difficult negotiations concerning Brexit, which the whole House will want to scrutinise. Unfortunately, there have been some leaks, with the other side in the process expressing dismay at the weakness of the Government's negotiating skills—but that is enough about coalitions of chaos with the Democratic Unionist party; we must get on to the even more crucial issue of Brexit. Labour accepted from the beginning that the decision of the referendum has been taken—we are leaving the European Union. The question is how and on what terms. The Government could have begun negotiations on a far better footing had Ministers accepted the will of the House in July last year and granted full rights to European Union nationals living in this country. I hope now that this minority Government will indeed listen to the wisdom of this House a bit more and work in partnership with our European neighbours.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): During the election campaign, the right hon. Gentleman repeatedly refused to rule out a second referendum on our EU membership. Given that Brexit negotiations have now commenced, will he take this opportunity to rule out a second referendum now?

Jeremy Corbyn: I am not sure the hon. Gentleman was listening very carefully to any of my many speeches in the general election campaign. I made it clear that we would negotiate sensibly and fairly with the European Union and bring the results of those negotiations back to this House.

It is in all our interests that we get a Brexit deal that puts jobs and the economy first. No deal is not better than a bad deal: it is a bad deal and not viable for this country. We need full access to the single market and a customs arrangement that provide Britain, as the Brexit Secretary has pledged, with the “exact same benefits” as now. Neither must arbitrary targets for immigration be prioritised over the jobs and living standards of the people of this country. Let us decide our immigration policy on the basis of the needs of our communities and our economy, not to the tune of the dog-whistle cynicism of Lynton Crosby or the hate campaigns of some sections of our press, whose idea of patriotism is to base themselves in an overseas tax haven.

Kelly Tolhurst (Rochester and Strood) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm the contradiction in his own plans? He plans not to reduce immigration numbers, but he also plans to stop employers recruiting overseas. Is it not the right hon. Gentleman who is a bit wobbly?

Jeremy Corbyn: Throughout the election campaign and before, we made it very clear that employers who unscrupulously recruit low-paid workers from overseas, exploit them in this country and run away with the profits, at the same time as creating community discord, are wrong; they are making money out of poverty and grossly exploiting very vulnerable people on both sides of the channel.

Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): The Tory position on the single market and the customs union is clear: we are out of both. What is the Labour position on the single market and the customs union?

Jeremy Corbyn: Again, our position has been absolutely clear. Our position is that we need tariff-free access to the European market to protect industries and jobs in this country. Let us have a little bit less from Conservative Members on the dangerous threat to turn Britain into a tax haven, which would threaten jobs and public services here far more than in mainland Europe.

We do not yet know the official title of the Government's much-trumpeted great repeal Bill, but if we are talking about taking back control, Parliament must be able to scrutinise legislation. Thankfully, the thin gruel of this Gracious Speech allows plenty of time for longer debates and greater scrutiny. That must include ensuring that the Human Rights Act and our commitment to the European convention on human rights and the human rights of everyone in this country remain completely and totally intact. We will ensure that they do.

It is our determination that by working with devolved Administrations, responsibilities such as agriculture and fisheries will be devolved to those Administrations and not hoarded in Whitehall. On the subject of devolved Administrations, may I also wish the Prime Minister every success in reconvening talks with all parties to restore the Stormont Assembly in Belfast as soon as possible? We also very much hope that any deal with the DUP in this place respects the overriding priority of the Good Friday agreement to maintain peace in Northern Ireland.

A state visit from the Spanish Head of State was announced for July, but can the Prime Minister update the House on whether she can still expect the United States' Head of State to visit any time this year, or any time in the future? It is just a question.

As I said earlier, public service workers, such as fire service, police and NHS staff, receive huge praise when they respond to terrorist attacks and other major incidents, but it is not good enough to be grateful to our public service workers only at a moment of crisis and disaster. They deserve dignity—the dignity of fully funded services, and the dignity of not seeing their jobs cut and living standards fall. There are now 20,000 fewer police officers than there were when the Conservatives came into office in 2010. When the police raised this subject with the then Home Secretary, do you know what, Mr Speaker? She accused the police officers of crying wolf.

I hope the current Prime Minister will correct the mistakes of the former Home Secretary. The Gracious Speech promises the police and security services

“all the powers they need”,

but what they deserve and what the public demand is that they have all the resources they need.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: It is manifestly clear that, at the moment, the Leader of the Opposition is not giving way.

Jeremy Corbyn: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

What was briefed to the media yesterday about scrapping the changes to the police funding formula is insufficient—

Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab): Yes it is.

Jeremy Corbyn: My hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Christian Matheson) is very prescient and forward-sighted. I thank him very much. The changes would only have moved funding between rural and urban forces, when the real issue is the £2.3 billion cut to police budgets in the past five years.

Our firefighters did an outstanding job at the Grenfell Tower fire, but they worked incredibly long shifts, in part because there are 600 fewer firefighters and 10 fewer fire stations in London—cuts and closures that were forced through by the previous Mayor of London. Talking to those firefighters, exhausted from their work, who went into a burning building to save people, I asked, “Why do you do it? Why do you go in when you know it's so difficult and so dangerous?” They said, “Because we're firefighters. That's what we're trained to do. That's why we serve the public the way we do.” We need more of them and there needs to be greater security for all of them. We have to fund our fire services properly, and not just at a time of crisis.

I welcome the fact that there is a public inquiry into Grenfell, but can we take action now? I pay tribute to councils such as Croydon Council, which has committed this week to installing sprinklers in all tower blocks of 10 storeys or more. However, such minimal fire safety standards cannot be left to a postcode lottery, so will the Government make available emergency funds for councils to check cladding and install sprinklers?

The Government should also have committed themselves to passing a public safety Bill to implement the recommendations of the 2013 inquiry into the fire at Lakanal House, and to reversing their guidance that removed the requirement to install sprinklers in new school buildings. They could still do so and they would have our support. That could happen in addition to any recommendations of the Grenfell Tower inquiry.

Rachel Reeves (Leeds West) (Lab): I thank my right hon. Friend for what he has said about sprinkler systems for high-rise flats. There are 116 blocks of high-rise flats in my city of Leeds, 26 of which are in my constituency. Only eight—those that are sheltered accommodation—have sprinklers. It would cost £30 million to have sprinklers in all those flats. Will he join me in urging the Government to provide the money for all local authorities to put sprinklers in their high-rises?

Jeremy Corbyn: I absolutely thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. Indeed, during the discussion we held in Westminster Hall about this matter last week, my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) raised a similar point about the number of tower blocks.

I do not suppose that many Members of this House live in tower blocks, but just think for a moment of the sense of fear that so many people would have had when they saw the Lakanal House fire—people living on the 15th, 16th or 17th floor, knowing that there is no fire ladder that can reach them and no helicopter that can land. They are reliant on being able to get out or the fire being contained. We need to give everyone that assurance. Local authorities that have seen massive cuts in their budgets over the past years need the resources now to install the necessary sprinkler and fire prevention systems.

We cannot use the excuse that the money is not there; the money has got to be there to ensure that we save lives in the future. We will support the Government if they are able to bring that forward.

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Jeremy Corbyn: I will give way for the last time, then I must move on.

Andy Slaughter: On behalf of my hon. Friends the Members for Kensington (Emma Dent Coad) and for Westminster North (Ms Buck) and myself, may I thank my right hon. Friend for visiting the area and making this issue an absolute priority? Will he and the Government ensure that disaster relief in north Kensington and pursuing the issue of the safety of people in tower blocks are made the absolute No. 1 priority?

Jeremy Corbyn: I thank my hon. Friend for that, and for the support that he has given my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Emma Dent Coad) in the work that has been done. What happened in Grenfell Tower is terrifying for all those in the area, and the problems that have ensued since indicate just what happens when local authority spending is cut to the bone and local authorities cannot cope as a result. We need properly funded, good-quality public services in this country.

The Prime Minister says that legal support will be made available to the families affected by the Grenfell Tower fire, but they should have had access to legal aid beforehand. When they were raising their desperate concerns about fire safety, they were ignored by a Conservative-controlled local authority. The lessons of the failed austerity programme must urgently be learned. We cannot have council housing—social housing—on the cheap, and we cannot have public services on the cheap. We have to invest in them. So will the Prime Minister now halt the cuts to the police—cuts that the former Metropolitan Police Commissioner this week called “an absurdity”? Those cuts have affected our prisons, too. Her Majesty’s chief inspector of prisons has expressed his concern at the lack of a prisons and courts reform Bill, which could have implemented our election manifesto promise to employ another 3,000 prison officers.

Our children’s schools are facing budget cuts. Can the Prime Minister confirm whether cuts to per-pupil funding are going ahead, and can she clarify for the House the status of the national funding formula? Headteachers and teachers are going through incredible stress, with oversized classes and the difficulty of maintaining teachers in employment.

The Gracious Speech mentioned legislation to protect victims of domestic violence, but does that include restoring legal aid in such cases or restoring the funding needed to reopen the many refuges that have been closed?

We welcome the reform of mental health legislation to give it greater priority, and we would welcome an assurance that no mental health trust will see its budget cut this year, as 40% of them did last year.

Will the Prime Minister call time on the public sector pay cap, which means that our nurses are 14% worse off today than they were seven years ago? As she is aware, some nurses and other public service workers have been forced to resort to using food banks, alongside more

than 1 million other people in this country. Rising inflation, the effects of low pay and falling real incomes are going to hit even more families—the 6 million workers earning less than the living wage, the millions of people in insecure work, those subject to the benefit freeze and 5.5 million public servants. We owe them a much better deal than they have been given by this Government in the past seven years.

My party, Labour, won almost 13 million votes at the election, and that was because we offered hope and opportunity for all and a real change to our country. The Prime Minister began the election campaign saying:

“If I lose just six seats I will lose this election”.

When it came to it, she lost more than four times that many seats to Labour alone. From Cardiff to Canterbury, from Stockton to Kensington, people chose hope over fear, and they sent an unequivocal message that austerity must be brought to an end. Seven years of Conservative rule has left wages falling, inflation rising, the pound falling, personal debt rising and the economy slowing. By no stretch of the imagination could any of that be described as strong or stable.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Jeremy Corbyn: I have given way to three Members on the Government Benches and three Members on the Opposition Benches, so I will continue and conclude my speech. [HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear!”] Thank you.

If we want to boost pay, the most effective means is through strong and independent trade unions—workers collectively defending and improving their pay and conditions—so we would repeal the Trade Union Act 2016 and strengthen collective bargaining.

Across Britain, people have shown that they believe there is a better way. In recent years, this Government have thrown away tens of billions of pounds in tax giveaways to the very richest and to big business, at the very same time as closing Sure Start centres and libraries, and tipping social care into crisis and our national health service into record deficit. Under Conservative rule, school budgets have been cut and college courses have been closed, students have been saddled with a lifetime of debt, and per-patient funding in the NHS is set to fall for the first time in history.

Our manifesto—for the many, not the few—and its popular policies set out a very different path, which caught the imagination of millions, and a way for the public really to take back control, so that our key utilities and our railways are taken into public ownership and run in the interests of the many, and not to pay the dividends of the few. We would end austerity by making very different choices; by asking the highest 5% of earners to pay a little bit more while keeping the top 10 percentage points lower than it was for most of Margaret Thatcher’s time in office; and by asking big business to pay a little more in tax, while retaining a lower corporation tax rate than any other G7 country.

Austerity and inequality are choices. They are not necessities. They are not unfortunate outcomes. They are a choice to make life worse for the many to maintain the privilege of a few. If the Government reject austerity, challenge inequality, invest to expand and rebalance our economy, they will have our support, but if they continue down this path of deliberately making people

[Jeremy Corbyn]

worse off, of deepening division, and of neglecting communities that deserve support and respect, we will oppose them every step of the way.

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Jeremy Corbyn: No. I will continue my speech.

This is a Government without a majority, without a mandate and without a serious legislative programme, led by a Prime Minister who has lost her political authority, and who is struggling even today to stitch together a deal to stay in office.

Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I hope it is a point of order. I am not going prejudice it. Let's hear the attempted point of order.

Mrs Miller: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I am simply seeking your advice. I have been in the House for 12 years. Government Members can be somewhat disappointed that the Leader of the Opposition is not a position to answer our questions. Perhaps you can advise on the usual format in these cases.

Mr Speaker: All I will say to the right hon. Lady is this: I am much touched by her faith in my abilities or her assessment of the extent of my powers. Disappointment may be very regrettable, but it is not a matter for the Chair.

Jeremy Corbyn: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am deeply sorry that—

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. The right hon. Gentleman, the Leader of the Opposition, said about 10 minutes ago, "In conclusion." I fear, as time has passed, that he may be in danger of inadvertently having misled the House, and I thought you might want to take the opportunity to set this right.

Mr Speaker: No. Some people may think that the hon. Gentleman is fastidious and others may conclude that he is pedantic. You pay your money and you take your choice, but there is no disorder here, although if people persist in raising what they know not to be points of order, that would itself be disorderly, and I know that the hon. Gentleman of all people would not want to stray into such misdemeanour.

Jeremy Corbyn: Just for the record, I have given way six times in this debate and there are six days of debate, so hon. Members will all have plenty of time to make their points during the debate.

We will use every opportunity to vote down Government policies that have failed to win public support. We will use every opportunity to win support for our programme. Labour is not merely an Opposition; we are a Government in waiting, with a policy programme that enthused and engaged millions of people in this election, many for the first time in their political lives. We are ready to offer real strong and stable leadership in the interests of the

many, not the few. We will test this Government's Brexit strategy and the legislation that comes forward against that standard.

This election engaged more people than for a generation—a tribute to our democracy. In the election, Labour set out a vision of what this country could be. It could be more equal. It could be more prosperous. It could have opportunities for all. That is what we on this side of the House will be putting forward in this Parliament—what we will be fighting for in this Parliament; what we will be demanding in this Parliament. The people of this country deserve something better than this thin piece of very little, when they have so many problems they want and demand answers to from this Parliament. We will engage fully and make the case for a prosperous, more stable and more cohesive society in Britain.

3.32 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May): I am sure that the whole House will want to join me in sending our very best wishes to His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, following the news that he has been admitted to hospital. Our thoughts are with Her Majesty the Queen and the whole royal family, and we wish him a full and speedy recovery.

Let me also join the Leader of the Opposition in condemning the appalling terrorist attack in his constituency earlier this week. I pay tribute to the work he did through the night with his constituents on Sunday. I know that the thoughts and prayers of the whole House are with the family and friends of the victim who died and all those who were injured. I am sure that the House will want to pay tribute to the police and the emergency services for once again responding with the extraordinary professionalism and courage that makes our whole country so proud of them. This was the fourth terrorist attack on our country in three months, following the attacks here in Westminster, in Manchester and at London Bridge. This time it was an attack on British Muslims as they left their place of worship at a sacred time of year. It was a brutal and sickening reminder that terrorism, extremism and hatred can take many forms, and that our determination to tackle them must be the same whoever is responsible. This Queen's Speech takes important steps in helping us to do so.

We will review our counter-terrorism strategy to ensure that the police and security services have all the powers that they need, and that the lengths of custodial sentences for terrorism-related offences are sufficient to keep people safe. We will work to reach international agreements that regulate cyberspace to prevent the spread of extremism and terrorist planning, and encourage tech companies to do more to remove harmful content from their networks. We will establish a new commission for countering extremism as a statutory body to help to fight hatred and extremism in the same way as we have fought racism, because this extremism is every bit as insidious and destructive to our families, and we will stop at nothing to defeat it.

I hope that, whatever our disagreements, we can all at least welcome the focus in the Queen's Speech on stamping out extremist and hateful ideology of any kind, including Islamophobia. Like all terrorism in whatever form, Monday's attack sought to drive us apart and to break

the precious bonds of solidarity and citizenship that we share in this country. Our response must be to stand together more strongly than ever to show that hatred and evil of this kind will never succeed, and that our values and our way of life will always prevail.

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab): I think that the whole House will agree with what the Prime Minister has said. Does she agree with me that we need to work and engage with communities—all communities—and that they should play a leadership role in ensuring that we reject, once and for all, terrorism?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. When I visited Finsbury Park on Monday, I was struck by the interfaith way in which the various faith communities were coming together. I saw representatives of the Muslim faith, the Jewish community and the Christian community all coming together with one ambition: to drive extremism and hatred out of our society.

Nadhim Zahawi (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con): This is the first time we have come together since Manchester, London Bridge and, of course, Finsbury Park. Countering extremism and terrorism of all kinds must be a priority for the Government. Will my right hon. Friend join me in calling on all Members to give our security agencies the tools for which they have asked through the Gracious Speech, so that they can do their job properly?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. Given that I believe there is a desire throughout the House for us to deal with terrorism, and to drive out terrorism and extremism of all kinds, I hope that all Members will feel able to support the Government when we introduce measures in order to do just that.

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): When she was Home Secretary, the Prime Minister made a decision to weaken the surveillance powers of the police and intelligence services by abolishing control orders. Will she now accept that that decision was a mistake? Will she review it, and will she strengthen the powers of the police and intelligence services as they do their very difficult task of monitoring suspects who may have the intention of doing harm, but have not yet committed a crime?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman refers to control orders. What was happening with the control orders, which were introduced by a previous Labour Government, was that they were increasingly being knocked down in the courts. We introduced terrorism prevention and investigation measures, and we have subsequently enhanced those measures. Through the Investigatory Powers Act 2016, which we introduced when I was Home Secretary, we have also ensured that our police and our intelligence and security agencies have the powers that they need. What we have seen is an increase in the tempo of attack planning. We have seen the terrible terrorist attacks that have taken place, and we should remember that over the same period, five other plots have been foiled by our police and security services. That shows the increasing scale and tempo, and it is in that context that we need to look to ensure

that our security services and our police have the powers that they need in the future. I look forward to the right hon. Gentleman joining us and ensuring that we give those powers to our agencies.

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): The Prime Minister will be aware that concerns have been raised across the country about the cuts in policing that were made in the last Parliament and the impact that they have had on the connection between the police and our communities. Will she now confirm that she will seek to reverse those cuts to ensure that we have such a connection when there are greater demands on police time and we need much more reassurance about the return of that connection with our communities?

The Prime Minister: As I am sure the hon. Lady is aware, we have protected counter-terrorism policing. We are providing funding for an uplift in armed policing, but we are also protecting police budgets, which of course is a different approach from the view that was put forward by the former shadow Home Secretary—he is now the Mayor of Manchester—who said that the police could take 10% cuts in their budget. We did not listen to that; we protected them.

I would also like to say a few words about the disaster at Grenfell Tower. The whole country was heartbroken by the horrific loss of life and the utter devastation that we have seen. I am sure that the whole House will join me in sending our deepest condolences to the friends and families of all those who lost loved ones. Today, we also think of those who survived but lost everything. One lady I met ran from the fire wearing no more than a T-shirt and a pair of knickers. She had lost absolutely everything.

Let me be absolutely clear. The support on the ground for families in the initial hours was not good enough. People were left without belongings, without a roof over their heads, and without even basic information about what had happened, what they should do and where they could seek help. That was a failure of the state—local and national—to help people when they needed it most. As Prime Minister, I apologise for that failure and, as Prime Minister, I have taken responsibility for doing what we can to put things right. That is why each family whose home was destroyed is receiving a down payment from the emergency fund so that they can buy food, clothes and other essentials, and all those who have lost their homes will be rehoused within three weeks.

There will also be an independent public inquiry, chaired by a judge, to get to the truth about what happened and who was responsible, and to provide justice for the victims and their families who suffered so terribly. All those with an interest, including survivors and victims' families, will be consulted about the terms of reference, and those affected will have their legal costs paid. Because it is clear that the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has not been able to cope with the scale of the tragedy, we will also develop a new strategy for resilience in major disasters, which could include a new civil disaster response taskforce that can help at times of emergency. We must learn some of the lessons of this and previous disasters when bereaved families have not had the support they need.

Ms Karen Buck (Westminster North) (Lab): An estimated 8% of London's population live in tower blocks—the same point has been made in respect of other cities. Inner-London authorities such as Westminster have lost 45% of their funding in recent years—that includes funding for environmental health responsibilities—and for Kensington the figure is 38%. Will the Prime Minister today guarantee that local authorities will be fully funded for an urgent review of tower block safety and all remedial action that is necessary, including the installation of sprinklers when appropriate, so that they can proceed in a matter of days with that comfort? Does she agree that regulation is a necessary element of a safe society, not a burden, and will she legislate swiftly when necessary to ensure that all high-rise residents are safe?

The Prime Minister: All of us across the House share a desire to ensure that people are safe and can have the confidence of being safe in their homes. Work was started immediately by the Department for Communities and Local Government, encouraging local authorities, and they have been working with the fire service to look at the issues in their tower blocks and to assess those tower blocks.

We do not yet know the absolute cause of the fire in Grenfell Tower. Work on that is ongoing, and we will take what action is necessary, including by learning the lessons that come out of it. The hon. Lady speaks about regulation. Of course, rigorous fire regulation is in place. If requirements to change that come out of the investigation that is taking place, we will of course act and do so swiftly.

Just so that right hon. and hon. Members are aware, there are of course a number of investigations. The police have opened a criminal investigation. The fire service and the Building Research Establishment are investigating as quickly as possible the exact cause of the fire so that any action that is required as a result of that work can be taken. Of course, there is also the public inquiry that I have announced.

We must learn some of the lessons of this and previous disasters when bereaved families have not had the support they need, so we will also introduce an independent public advocate for public disasters. That will be a strong independent voice for victims, acting on behalf of bereaved families and supporting them at public inquests and inquiries.

Let me join the Leader of the Opposition in paying tribute to the two Members of Parliament whom we lost in the course of the last year. Gerald Kaufman was an outstanding parliamentarian who served this House and his constituents in Manchester for an incredible 46 years. We did not agree on everything but, as Father of the House, he was an invaluable source of wisdom and experience for Members on both sides, and he will be greatly missed.

The despicable murder of Jo Cox shocked and devastated this House and the country. Jo was an inspirational MP, a campaigner and a humanitarian whose mission in life was defined by hope and love. Her killer sought instead to spread hate and division, but last weekend, as part of "The Great Get Together", I and many hundreds of thousands of others—including, I am sure, Members of this House—in her honour came together, stood together and pulled together all across the country to unite against that hatred and to prove, in Jo's own words, that we have far more in common than that which divides us.

I am sure the whole House will join me in paying tribute to Jo's husband, Brendan, for the extraordinary courage and strength that he has shown in dealing with such personal tragedy and for honouring Jo's memory in such an inspiring way. Whatever our disagreements in this House, may we all honour Jo's memory and show that in our United Kingdom hope will always triumph over hate.

The House will know that the first part of a successful Queen's Speech is finding someone to propose the address. That is, of course, intended to be a witty speech, as indeed the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Richard Benyon) was today—from my point of view a little too witty, as he took all the jokes I had written in my speech. I have to say—[*Interruption.*] Wait for it. Over the years that my right hon. Friend has been the Member for Newbury and in the years when he was fighting to take the seat, he has shown a great commitment not only to his constituents, but to the important task of government and building a stronger economy and a fairer society. I know, for example, as a fellow Berkshire MP, the work he has done to raise awareness of an issue that I am particularly concerned about: mental health. He also made a significant contribution during his time as a Minister. I understand that once, as fisheries Minister, he mixed up his cod and his skate, but I am sure that, like the rest of us, he will not fail to welcome the absence in this House today of Salmond.

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP): I wonder if the Prime Minister's reason for not welcoming the former right hon. Member is that he scares her.

The Prime Minister: I have to say to the hon. Lady that the reason why I am not welcoming the former right hon. Member to this House is because he was beaten by a Conservative in the election.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Newbury showed great skill and tenacity over his three years of negotiations on the common fisheries policy. The process started with the UK as a minority of one, and ended with the EU unanimously supporting a reform agenda, the principles of which will be at the heart of the fisheries Bill in this Queen's Speech. He was also the Minister who secured cross-party support for moving our canals and waterways from the public to the charitable sector, creating the Canal & River Trust, one of the biggest and best endowed charities in this country. He made an excellent speech today in the finest traditions of this House.

The motion was brilliantly seconded by my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Kwasi Kwarteng). He is a distinguished political historian and a prolific writer, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out. I understand that my hon. Friend has a particular interest in female Prime Ministers. Indeed, Members may know that his most recent book profiled the most testing six months for our country's first female Prime Minister. It ran to 272 pages; I fear his next book could be somewhat longer.

My hon. Friend is also widely regarded for his good looks. In fact, *The Sunday Telegraph* once described him as a Tory "heart-throb", and during his time on "University Challenge", I gather he even made it to page 3 of *The Sun*. Perhaps most significantly, he is confounding

the *Daily Mail*, which cited the 1995 “University Challenge” winning team of which my hon. Friend was a member when arguing that

“all too often the brainy winners of the BBC’s flagship programme sink without trace after their moment in the spotlight.”

I could not disagree more. The House has today seen his talents on full display. He gave a tremendous speech with flair, substance and wit. He brings an historian’s wisdom to the challenges and opportunities that our country faces, and I have no doubt that he will make a major contribution in the years ahead.

Let me welcome the hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) as the new leader of the Scottish National party here in Westminster. I am also, of course, particularly pleased to welcome to the Conservative Benches my 13 Scottish Conservative colleagues. It is good that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will not have to put up with any more jokes about pandas.

Turnout at the election was higher than in 2015, including many more younger people. While those of us on this side of the House would have preferred more of them to vote for us, more young people going to the ballot box is something that we should all welcome.

Let me also welcome the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) back to his place as the Leader of the Opposition. He fought a spirited campaign and he came a good second, which was better than the pundits predicted and than many of his own MPs hoped for.

Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): The Prime Minister is celebrating her immense triumph following the recent campaign, but I could not help but notice something as she and the Leader of the Opposition went off to listen to the Queen’s Speech. Thinking back to when I was at school and we came back having not seen people for six weeks, I thought, “Has she shrunk, or has he grown?”
[*Interruption.*]

Christian Matheson: I was hoping that the Prime Minister might answer my—

Mr Speaker: Order. We are going to hear from the hon. Gentleman—[*Interruption.*] No, I am bottling him up. We are going to hear from him in a moment, but we normally have a response to an intervention before we hear another intervention. I call the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I was indicating the fact that I did not think that that intervention required or justified a response.

Mr Speaker: In procedural terms, I am afraid it did. It has now received a response.

Christian Matheson: As always, Mr Speaker, I am inclined to agree with you.

I thank the Prime Minister for calling the general election, in which I increased my majority from 93 votes to 9,176. She talks about the increase in the number of young people voting, so why is she introducing voter suppression methods such as obliging people to show identification before they can vote?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that anybody in this House who values democracy also wants to ensure that that democracy is fair and free of fraud. It is in that spirit that we are introducing requirements for people to identify themselves. That is a perfectly reasonable requirement to ensure that the people who are voting are those who are entitled to do so.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): If the Prime Minister values votes for young people and democracy, I look forward to her bringing forward votes for 16 and 17-year-olds.

The Prime Minister: That is an issue on which the hon. Gentleman and I will continue to disagree.

The election also showed that, as we face the big challenges of our future, our country is divided: red versus blue; young versus old; leave versus remain.

As I said here last week, the test for all of us is whether we choose to reflect divisions or help the country overcome them. With humility and resolve, this Government will seek to do the latter. We will do what is in the national interest, and we will work with anyone, in any party, that is prepared to do the same.

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): I thank the Prime Minister for her commitment to tackling social injustice. Will she say a little more about what we can do to stop people being discriminated against on the grounds of race?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for raising that. This will reflect the outcome of the very important racial disparity audit, which we introduced virtually as soon as I became Prime Minister last year. I think it is important that we test what is happening in relation to our public services. As Home Secretary, I was struck by the examples I saw; I took action on stop and search—that had never been done by a Labour Government—because I thought it was important that nobody was stopped on the streets of our country because of the colour of their skin. There were other issues that we addressed in government previously. Our racial disparity audit will show us what is happening in our public services, and we will be able to act on the back of that to ensure truly that the approach we are taking is fair and that there is not that discrimination—

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I am going to make a little progress before I give way again.

We will work every day to earn the trust and confidence of the British people, and we will make their priorities our priorities, dealing head-on with the major challenges that our country faces—that is what this Queen’s Speech is all about.

James Morris (Halesowen and Rowley Regis) (Con) *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I am going to make a little progress and then I will give way again.

This Queen’s Speech is about recognising and grasping the opportunities for every community in our country to benefit as we leave the European Union; it is about delivering the will of the British people with a Brexit deal that works for all parts of our United Kingdom

[*The Prime Minister*]

and that commands the greatest possible public support; it is about building a new, deep and special partnership with our European friends and neighbours—because we are leaving the European Union but we are not leaving Europe; and it is about seizing this moment of national change to deliver a plan for a stronger, fairer Britain by strengthening our economy, tackling injustice, and promoting opportunity and aspiration for all. Because, as I have said many times before, the referendum vote was not just a vote to leave the European Union; it was a profound and justified expression that our country often does not work the way it should for millions of ordinary families. This Queen's Speech begins to change that, by putting fairness at the heart of our agenda.

James Morris: My right hon. Friend knows that I have been a long-standing campaigner on improving mental health care in this country. The truth is that many people across our country today are not getting the care they need, including many children who, in very traumatised states, are spending too long in queues to get appropriate treatment. What is she going to do to convert the warm words of the Government on parity of esteem into actual action on mental health?

The Prime Minister: May I commend my hon. Friend, who, as he said, has, while in this House and before, been a champion for mental health and has done important work on it? There are a number of strands to what the Government want to do, one of which is putting in place a new mental health Act, but we will of course consult widely on that. I also want to ensure that every school—every primary and secondary—has a member of staff who is trained to identify mental health problems and knows how to deal with those issues. When I met the charity YoungMinds a few weeks ago, I was very struck by the issue of raising awareness of mental health problems, particularly among young people: the earlier we can address these issues, the better we can deal with them and the better life we can ensure for the people with these mental health problems. Those are some of the things we will be putting in place, but I look forward to working with him on ensuring that what we are doing addresses the issues we need to address.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I will give way to the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas).

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): I am grateful to the right hon. Lady for giving way. It is good to see her here facing the other parties—she has actually turned up, which was not always the case during the election campaign.

The Gracious Speech contained eight Brexit Bills but not one of them covered the environment. Is her failure to propose a Brexit Bill on the greatest challenge that we face because she simply does not care about the environment and climate change, or is it because she has been influenced by the DUP dinosaurs, who sit beside me and who do not want to take that kind of leadership in the future?

The Prime Minister: I am very conscious of the significant amount of legislation from Europe that affects environmental matters. Those issues are being—

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson (Lagan Valley) (DUP): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Members of my party were elected by the people of Northern Ireland to represent the constituents who elected us to the House. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) to describe us in the unparliamentary terms in which she did, and which I regret? She does not understand my party's policy on the environment—she should go and read our manifesto—but we have the right to speak for the people of Northern Ireland, and in this Parliament we will.

Mr Speaker: Let me say two things in response to the, I am sure, sincere point of order from the right hon. Gentleman. First, the use of the word in question is not unparliamentary; it is a matter of taste as to its desirability or otherwise. Secondly, I know how robust a character the right hon. Gentleman is, and I would simply say that the word in question refers to a species that survived for many, many millions of years.

The Prime Minister: As I said, the Queen's Speech is about putting fairness at the heart of our agenda. That is about building a stronger economy by delivering a modern industrial strategy so that all parts of our country and all parts of our society share in the benefits of economic growth, and by investing in the world-leading infrastructure that can unlock growth in our economy and improve the quality of people's lives across the whole country. It is about building a fairer society by increasing the national living wage so that people who are on the lowest pay see their wages go up as the economy strengthens, and by ensuring that every child has access to a good school place.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I am going to make a little more progress before I give way again.

It is about creating a world-class system of technical education, so that all young people have the vital skills they need to do the jobs of the future. It is about acting to make markets fairer by tackling unfair practices wherever they are found.

Kevin Hollinrake: The Prime Minister mentions opportunity; does she agree that one way we must deliver opportunities is by allowing more young people to get on the housing ladder? Will she reinforce her previous commitment to increase house building to 250,000 homes a year, which is a much bolder and more ambitious commitment than the Labour party has made?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is incredibly prescient, because my very next sentence was going to be about tackling the housing crisis that locks so many young people out of the housing market. We do indeed recognise the significance of the housing problem in this country. It is about not only building more houses but keeping going schemes that help people to get on the housing ladder and ensuring greater diversity in the housing market. With rent to buy and shared ownership, there is a variety of opportunities for young people.

We will be tackling discrimination on the basis of mental health, sexuality, faith, disability, gender or race.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): How is the interim Prime Minister going to convince the country that she can negotiate a successful Brexit with 27 other EU countries within the time limit, when she has not even been able to negotiate a deal with 10 Democratic Unionist Members of this House in the time between the election and the Queen's Speech?

The Prime Minister: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to welcome the work that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union has undertaken in preparing our negotiations and starting the formal negotiations on Monday this week. I will be in Brussels for the EU Council later this week to take that work further forward.

Mr Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley) (Con): I am grateful that the Brexit talks have now started. The ability of those people who have come from the other 27 countries to live and work in the UK, and the status of the UK citizens living and working in the other 27 countries, is going to be a vital part of those talks. They will be waiting to learn of their future. Will the Prime Minister guarantee to the House that she will come here as quickly as possible, without waiting until the discussions have finished, to assure them that they will be able to live and remain in the countries where they have decided to live and work?

The Prime Minister: We have always said, from the beginning of this process, that we want to address that issue at an early stage of the negotiations. Indeed, that is the agreement that has been reached: it is one of the very first issues that will be addressed in the negotiations. I will make every effort, and I guarantee to my hon. Friend that I expect to be able to come to the House to show the opportunities that the United Kingdom will be setting out for those EU citizens who live here in the UK. Of course, we want to see UK citizens in the European Union being treated fairly as well, but we will soon be setting out our offer as regards EU citizens living here in the United Kingdom.

Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab): I am grateful to the Prime Minister for giving way. The fact is that the Gracious Speech has been made today and the Prime Minister still cannot tell us how her Government will be composed and how it will be supported. Given that she asked for a very personal mandate during the general election campaign and did not get one, the only question is: why is she still here?

The Prime Minister: Let me just point out a few facts to the hon. Gentleman. Which party got the highest percentage share of the vote, Labour or Conservative? Conservative. Which party got more votes—800,000 more—than the other party, Labour or Conservative? Conservative—[*Interruption.*] Which party got 56 more seats than the Labour party—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. I will not have the Prime Minister, or the Leader of the Opposition, or any Member of this House shouted down—[*Interruption.*] Order. Mr Campbell, I'm sure you mean well—[*Interruption.*] Order. You are wittering away from a sedentary position to no obvious benefit or purpose. I am sure you mean well, but I do not require your assistance at this time.

The Prime Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was merely pointing out that the Conservative party got 56 more seats than the Labour party. We are doing what is in the national interest, forming a Government to address the challenges that face this country. It is a critical time and it is important that we have a Government committed to the national interest.

John Penrose (Weston-super-Mare) (Con): The Prime Minister just mentioned making markets work better and for everybody. She knows that the energy price cap had wide cross-party support from both sides of this House, so I was delighted to see energy price protection and pro-consumer switching and transparency measures in the Queen's Speech. Will she confirm that those measures mean the price cap to deliver 17 million customers the £100 savings we promised in our manifesto, rather than the narrower or more anti-competitive counter-proposals from the big six energy firms?

The Prime Minister: I can confirm to my hon. Friend that we do indeed intend to take action on this issue. We recognise the problem in relation to energy bills and we want to ensure that we get the best measure in place to deliver what we all want, which is to see people no longer being ripped off by high energy tariffs.

Oliver Dowden (Hertsmere) (Con): The Prime Minister has talked about the national interest and the need for cross-party support. Does she agree that for her excellent proposal of a commissioner for extremism to work it requires the engagement not just of Government Members but of Opposition Members, if we are to stamp out the evil ideology of extremism that drives terrorism in this country?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We have spoken a lot about the need to deal with terrorism. Of course we need to look at the powers we have to deal with terrorists, but we also need to ensure that we deal with the extremism and hatred that fuel that terrorism. That is why the commission for countering extremism is so important, and I hope, as I said earlier, that it is a measure that can be supported in all parts of the House. It is important if we are to ensure that we drive this extremism and hatred out of our society.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I have already taken three times as many interventions as the Leader of the Opposition, so I will make some progress.

We also want to build a more secure United Kingdom, investing in our defence and national security and enhancing our leading role on the world stage, strengthening the social, economic and cultural bonds between England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, delivering on our commitment to devolution by working in co-operation with all the devolved Administrations, and working with all the parties of Northern Ireland to support the return of devolved government. Building a country that is stronger, fairer, safer and more secure for all our children and grandchildren, a country that works for everyone: that is our ambition, and that is what this Queen's Speech will help to deliver.

[The Prime Minister]

The first part of this Queen's Speech is of course about Brexit—a Brexit deal that works for every part of the country and commands the greatest possible public support. Over 80% of the electorate backed the two major parties, both of which campaigned on manifestos that said that we should honour the democratic decision of the British people, so this Government will respect the will of the British people and see Brexit through. We will seek to build a wide consensus as we do this and as we take Bills through the House, including a trade Bill, a repeal Bill, and an immigration Bill, as has been referred to, and also a Bill to deal with control of access to our waters for fishermen and a new Bill on agriculture to give greater stability to farmers.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I will make a little more progress, then take some more interventions.

If we are going to grasp opportunities as we leave the European Union we need to build a stronger economy. That is right: we have always understood, as Conservatives, that sound money and fiscal credibility are the foundation for everything else. That is why it was right to take the tough decisions we did after the financial crash, and it has paid off. The deficit is down by three quarters; employment is up by 2.9 million; and because of policies like the national living wage and taking 4 million of the lowest paid out of income tax altogether, inequality has been reduced to its lowest level for 30 years.

In this Queen's Speech we will continue to improve the public finances and work towards getting our country back to living within its means. We will also invest in the world-leading digital infrastructure that we need to benefit from the opportunities of new technology, and we will encourage businesses to grow and create jobs by continuing to cut corporation tax, because that is how to raise more money, not less.

Nigel Huddleston (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): Does the Prime Minister recognise that the economy is evolving and changing? If so, will she confirm that the Government are absolutely committed to securing the rights of people in the gig economy who are on different types of contracts from what has been the case historically?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We have asked Matthew Taylor to produce a report on the changing workplace and the changing structure of employment, particularly, as my hon. Friend has mentioned, with reference to the gig economy. When the report is published, we will look at the steps that the Government need to take to support people with their rights. As I have said in the past few weeks, we will enhance workers' rights. We believe in protecting those rights and enhancing them.

Mike Wood (Dudley South) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend ensure that legislation such as measures providing for the next phase of the high-speed rail project and other infrastructure investment mean that we can rebalance the economy to make sure that the whole country benefits from the economic progress to which she referred?

The Prime Minister: It is good to see my hon. Friend in his place, and to have seen him out on the campaign trail during the general election. I can absolutely confirm

that we will put the legislation through for the next stage of HS2, and we will also ensure that we continue to invest, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor set out in the autumn statement last year, in infrastructure projects around the country. I want a country that works for everyone and every part of the United Kingdom, and infrastructure is an important way of helping to deliver that.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP): May I take the Prime Minister back to what she said about making Brexit work for the entire United Kingdom? Will she tell the House whether a legislative consent motion will be required in the Scottish Parliament for the great repeal Bill?

The Prime Minister: That matter is currently being considered both here and in Scotland. There is a possibility that a legislative consent motion may be required in the Scottish Parliament, but that matter is being considered between the Westminster and Scottish Governments.

Liz Kendall (Leicester West) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: No, I am not going to do so. I am conscious that I have taken a significant number of interventions, and I shall make progress so that other Members can rise to speak.

I have said that we will protect rights and protect people as we leave the European Union—and, indeed, as we see changes in the employment structure in our economy. What we will not do is follow the economic prescriptions of the Labour party. There is absolutely nothing fair about punitive tax rises that lead to fewer jobs, lower wages and higher prices for ordinary working families. There is nothing fair about racking up debts for our children and grandchildren to pay. The only Government people can trust to build a stronger and fairer economy is a Conservative Government.

I have mentioned a fairer society. I want Britain to be a genuine great meritocracy, where everyone has a fair chance to go as far as their talent and hard work will take them. That is about ensuring that everybody plays by the same rules, that every child has access to a good school place, and that the right technical education is there. The measures in the Queen's Speech will help to do that, but they will also deal with some of the injustices in our society.

The draft domestic violence and abuse legislation will provide a statutory definition of this hideous crime and ensure that robust protective orders are available and that victims get the justice they deserve. I hope that this measure will be able to command support across the whole House. Many in this House have for many years championed the cause of dealing with domestic violence, and I hope that they will be able to join us in supporting this legislation.

Wendy Morton (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): As the Prime Minister is very aware, victims of domestic violence are the direct victims but also the oft-forgotten indirect victims such as children. Can she reassure us that steps will be taken to support those indirect victims too?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes a very fair point. One of the problems over the years has been that all too often people have looked at the immediate

victim or survivor of domestic violence and forgotten, for example, that it is not just a question of whether children have not seen something happening; they know what is happening and are affected by it. We will be looking at that issue.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I will give way one more time—to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen).

Albert Owen (Ynys Môn) (Lab): The House rightly praised the Prime Minister for the Hillsborough inquiry. Today I met victims of contaminated blood. Will she take this opportunity to ensure a full public inquiry for those affected and their families?

The Prime Minister: I note the point that the hon. Gentleman has made about contaminated blood and I will speak to the Secretary of State for Health. I think this has already been looked at, and other ways of dealing with this issue have already been introduced and addressed.

Edward Miliband (Doncaster North) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: No. Mr Speaker, we are building opportunity and aspiration. We will also deliver a more secure United Kingdom because of the choices that we are making to prioritise our defence and national security. Our armed forces Bill will give those who put their lives on the line in the service of our country the proper respect that they deserve, with more security in the way they live and work. Our commitment to renew Trident means that this country maintains its continuous at-sea nuclear deterrent as the ultimate guarantee of our safety, and with a Prime Minister who is prepared to use it. We will continue to play a leading role in international efforts to tackle mass migration and climate change, to alleviate poverty and to end modern slavery. We have always looked beyond Europe to the wider world and we will continue to do so.

In conclusion, this has been a difficult time for our country. I know that there are many parents who worry about the kind of world that their children are growing up in. I recognise that and understand it. It has been an unsettling time that has tested the spirit of our country, but we are a resilient country. Our response to disaster and acts of terror that take the lives of innocent people must be this: compassion, unity, resolve. We are a great nation and a great people. We have been through and survived the toughest of times before, and we thrived. Once again we can and will grow stronger from the challenges that we face today.

The Queen's Speech on its own will not solve every challenge that our country faces—not every problem can be solved by an Act of Parliament—but it is a step forward to building a more compassionate, united and confident nation. That is what this Government will aim to achieve and what this Queen's Speech will deliver. I commend the Queen's Speech to the House.

4.20 pm

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): May I begin by echoing the tributes of the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister to Members who have passed away—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. May I say two things? First, if Members leaving the Chamber did so quickly and quietly, it would be greatly appreciated. [*Interruption.*] Order. I do not require any assistance from the hon. Gentleman—I do know a thing or two about this place. Secondly, it is a very considerable discourtesy for a Member to walk out of the Chamber by walking straight past the Member who has the Floor. It is so obviously a discourtesy that I am surprised it is necessary to point it out.

Ian Blackford: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

May I begin by echoing the tributes of the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister to Members who have passed away in the last year? I pay tribute to my predecessor, the former right hon. Member for Moray, and thank him for his long service to this House and to the people of his constituency. I am sure right hon. and hon. Members will agree that, in the previous Parliament, Angus Robertson firmly established himself as a true statesman. Although we will miss his contribution to this place, I hope he continues to contribute to public life at a time when, more than ever, our national debate needs considered and rational voices. I also thank him for the leadership he demonstrated for the SNP at Westminster. We on the SNP Benches will miss a good friend.

I must say to the Prime Minister that she made a rather cheap gibe at the previous First Minister of Scotland. Let me point out that, unlike the Prime Minister, Alex Salmond at least won a majority in an election in Scotland. She may have made a rather cheap gibe at Alex Salmond, but she still has a Sturgeon that is very much going to be a thorn in her side.

This is the first time the House has met since the terrible events of this summer. On behalf of SNP Members, I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the professionalism, dedication and sacrifice of our emergency services, who have led the response to the awful events of this summer, and to whom we all owe a tremendous debt of gratitude.

The loss of life at Grenfell Tower was tragic and unnecessary. Family and friends of the victims will be heartbroken and grief-stricken, but many will be angry, too, that this tragedy could and should have been avoided. I speak on behalf of SNP Members when I commit our support to working with all parties in the Chamber to get those families and the country the answers they need and deserve.

Our summer was also marred by the cowardice and reckless violence of terrorism. The whole country is united in grief at the outrage of the attacks in Manchester, at London Bridge and, only this week, at the Finsbury Park mosque. In this place, we must all be united in showing leadership to all our citizens. Despite the despicable efforts of a small minority of misguided individuals, our communities and our society will not be divided. We stand firm against terrorists who attack Muslims, just as we stand against those who wrongly claim to act in the name of Islam.

It is customary to commend the mover and the seconder in proceedings on the Queen's Speech. I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Newbury (Richard Benyon), whose interest in, and knowledge of, agriculture and fisheries issues will be important in the coming months and years, as those two important sectors will be impacted by the kind of Brexit deal that is achieved.

[*Ian Blackford*]

I am told that the seconder, the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Kwasi Kwarteng), is a rising star of the right wing of the Conservative party.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: It's the only wing.

Ian Blackford: Well, indeed.

In that regard, the hon. Gentleman is a useful political compass for SNP Members, because if we are in doubt about our position on any issue, we need only position ourselves to be diametrically opposed to the view of the hon. Gentleman.

Although I may be a relative newcomer to this place, I was always under the impression that the Queen's Speech was intended to be an event that brought stability to the Government and to the country—an event where the Government set out what they intend to do and how they intend to govern. On this occasion, I cannot imagine that many in the country are feeling a sense of stability. To many, these may feel like the most uncertain and unstable of times facing the country. With rising inflation and low wage growth, working families will certainly not be feeling stability—they will feel uncertainty and a threat to their living standards. With a Conservative Government who have perpetuated the most indiscriminate and savage cuts to social security still clinging to power, the disabled and the vulnerable will not be feeling stability and certainty.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: Does my hon. Friend think that the Government must give an early signal of what they intend to do with regard to the closure of eight of Glasgow's 16 jobcentres? They should take that off the table right away.

Ian Blackford: I fully agree. This matter was much debated in the previous Parliament. It has demonstrated the hardship that many of my hon. Friend's constituents will face, and those in other constituencies in Glasgow. It would be an act of compassion by the Conservative Government if they were to do the right thing and remove the threat of closures to the Glasgow jobcentres.

With the threat of a hard Brexit and the loss of access to our most important markets, our exporting businesses will not be feeling stability and certainty. "Strong and stable" is what the Prime Minister offered the country, but "uncertain and unstable" is what she has delivered. Nothing in the Queen's Speech changes that.

That is most true in respect of the United Kingdom leaving the EU. This is the biggest issue facing the United Kingdom, and it will be the greatest challenge in this Parliament. A strong and stable approach might have involved the Prime Minister seeking consensus and working to protect the country from the most damaging potential impacts of a hard Brexit. That was, after all, what the Prime Minister promised us last year. Instead, we have a Prime Minister who called an unnecessary election designed to crush any opposition to her. Well, how did that work? Her gamble having backfired, she has—[*Interruption.*] I have to say that it is pretty remarkable to hear the gibes coming from Conservative Members, because we have a Government who are going to have to rely on the DUP to get any of their legislation through. When it comes to the position of Scotland, one cannot get away from the fact that the Scottish National party still won this election. Unlike the

Government, we have a majority of the seats in Scotland—something that the Conservatives could only ever dream about.

Mr Rees-Mogg: May congratulate the hon. Gentleman on becoming leader of the SNP group in Parliament? He is widely respected across the House and will, I think, be a brilliant leader for his troops. Does he not find that actually the SNP and the Tories are in the same position, because we both did less well than expectations but we both won more votes in our respective areas?

Ian Blackford: I commend the hon. Gentleman for his remarks. The Conservatives have still got to realise that we have a stable Government in Scotland concentrating on the day job. If anyone wants an example of strong and stable, look to what has happened in Edinburgh. One cannot get away from the fact that there are 59 parliamentary seats in Scotland and 35 of us who will stand up for Scotland in this Parliament. When it comes to defending the rights and the interests of the people of Scotland, I want to see every Scottish MP following the lead that we in the Scottish National party will give.

Nigel Huddleston: I, too, congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his new role. He does, indeed, command respect in all parts of the House. He mentioned that we would have to rely on the DUP to get legislation through, but surely there is something in the Gracious Speech—perhaps the proposals concerning domestic abuse—that he would support. We would like to get the support of some in his party for many of our proposed pieces of legislation.

Ian Blackford: Let me make absolutely clear the role that the Scottish National party will play in this Parliament. We will be a force for progressive politics. I commend my very dear friend the previous hon. Member for Banff and Buchan, who was responsible for pushing through the private Member's Bill on the Istanbul convention. I will certainly commend to the Scottish National party the idea of supporting the Government on any reasonable moves in that regard. I want to work for us so that we can get the best deal for the people of Scotland, particularly when it comes to Brexit.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on being elected the leader of his party. Has he noticed, as I have, that in the Queen's Speech there are no measures to deal with austerity? That suggests that the Government have learned nothing, particularly when it comes to the plight of WASPI women.

Ian Blackford: I thank my friend for that intervention, and I agree with him. There is unfinished business, certainly for me, having been the pensions spokesman for the SNP in the last Parliament. We will not leave the WASPI women without a voice. It is utterly disgraceful that some of the worst-affected women were given 14 months' written notice of an increase in their pensionable age. I have said before that, in this ridiculous situation, a woman born in February 1953 would have retired in January 2016 just shy of her 63rd birthday, but a woman born in February 1964 will not retire until July 2019, when she will be 65 and a half.

Quite simply, a two-and-a-half-year increase in a woman's pensionable age over a one-year period is unacceptable. Cridland identified in his review of the state pension age that we should not be looking at an increase in pensionable age of more than one year in every 10 years. As I have often pointed out to the Government, there is a very easy solution, which is to reverse the Pensions Act 2011. The cost of doing so would be £8 billion, which is easily affordable given that there is a surplus of £30 billion in the national insurance fund.

James Cartlidge (South Suffolk) (Con): The hon. Gentleman knows full well that the policy he has set out was shot to pieces when the permanent secretary of the Department for Work and Pensions confirmed that it is not even physically possible to use the surplus; and that in many years, the fund is in deficit. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that?

Ian Blackford: I think the WASPI women are due an apology from the hon. Gentleman, because we cannot get away from the fact that the Government Actuary's Department has indicated that the surplus this year is £30 billion. For goodness' sake, let us use the surplus in that fund to introduce mitigation for the WASPI women. It is the right thing to do.

I assure the Prime Minister that this issue will not go away. Let me commend Members from across the House, including Conservative Members, who want action to be taken. We cannot defend the fact that women were given only 14 months' notice, in some cases. That was a failure of communication, and the rise in pensionable age was far too swift. We must address the issue in this Parliament. I confirm that the SNP will not lose sight of the issue; we will stand foursquare behind the WASPI women in the months to come.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con) *rose*—

Ian Blackford: I want to make some progress, but I will happily take interventions later.

The Prime Minister's gamble backfired. She has desperately clung to power—at least for now—and stumbled into the Brexit negotiations on Monday morning regardless, with an almost all-male team equipped with no credible plan, no mandate and, seemingly, no functional Government. I can see that the Prime Minister is floundering. Where is the stable government that she promised us? It is not here.

It is worth reflecting on the fact that last year's Queen's Speech was delivered just one month before the nations of the United Kingdom voted on whether to remain a member of the European Union. In that referendum, Scotland voted clearly and decisively to remain in the European Union. Northern Ireland, too, voted to remain in the European Union. England and Wales, of course, voted to leave. There was a democratic divergence across the UK.

I had hoped that a compromise might be found that would work for all nations of the United Kingdom. Indeed, the Prime Minister herself said that article 50 would not be triggered until there was a UK approach and that she was willing to listen to all options. That is why last year the Scottish Government, in good faith and in a spirit of compromise, published proposals in "Scotland's Place in Europe". Those are credible proposals

that would mitigate the worst impacts of a hard Brexit. They would maintain the UK's membership of the single market while it leaves the EU or, failing that, maintain Scotland's membership of the single market within the United Kingdom.

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his new role. Will he set a new tone for his party by recognising that when a referendum has settled the matter that Scotland will remain in the UK and the UK has had a referendum that settles another matter, perhaps it would be good to stand up for democracy? Can we hear something new from his party?

Ian Blackford: Of course we in the Scottish National party have always accepted the result of the referendum in 2014. That is not in question. I say to Government Members that we were promised that if we voted to stay within the United Kingdom, our future in Europe would be protected.

When we went to the country last year, the Scottish National party stood on a manifesto commitment that if Scotland was dragged out of the European Union against its will, we would reserve the right to give the people of Scotland an insurance policy, whereby at the end of the Brexit process they would be able to have their say. I say to the Conservatives, who are chuntering from a sedentary position, that we won that election to the Scottish Parliament. A vote took place in the Scottish Parliament in which 69 Members of that Parliament voted to enact a referendum if the circumstances were right and 59 Members voted against. That is democracy. The people of Scotland have spoken and it is about time the Conservatives respected the sovereignty of the Scottish people.

The Government's executive summary to the Queen's Speech, which was published today, says that powers repatriated from the EU will be held at UK level until the UK negotiates with the devolved Governments. It states that the repeal Bill will

"replicate the common UK frameworks created by EU law in UK law, and maintain the scope of devolved decision-making powers immediately after exit."

It clarifies that the Government will centralise fisheries and agriculture matters through specific Bills on each. Page 22 tells us:

"Aspects of the Bill will extend to the UK, as international matters are not devolved. We will consult widely with the devolved administrations on the appropriate extent of any legislation."

This is the great power grab in action.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I wish the hon. Gentleman all the best in his new position as leader of the Scottish National party in this place. Does he accept that some MPs—good and honourable Members—lost their seats because of their position on Brexit, Europe and fisheries? It is important that the Scottish National party Members who are here commit themselves to the policy that we will take in this House to ensure that fisheries across the whole of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland are preserved, along with people's jobs.

Ian Blackford: The important point is that fisheries and agriculture are devolved. We will not sit back and watch this land grab from Westminster. Powers over

[*Ian Blackford*]

fisheries and agriculture must remain with the Scottish Parliament. There is a real question for Scottish Conservative Members: whose side will they be on? Will they be on the side of London or on the side of the people of Scotland? Let me tell them that if they do not stand up for Scotland, they will pay a price at the ballot box in future elections. [*Interruption.*] I know that many Conservatives from Scotland are here for the first time, but may I respectfully suggest to them that if they want to make an intervention, it is perhaps better to rise than to shout from a sedentary position? That is not the way we tend to behave in this Parliament.

John Redwood: Will the SNP representative tell us what measures in this Queen's Speech, if any, his party supports, or should we tell the UK public that SNP Members want to block everything and are negative about every progressive proposal in our Queen's Speech?

Ian Blackford: My goodness! I think I have demonstrated in my remarks so far that we will of course support progressive policies such as taking action on abuse, domestic violence and so on. If there are measures that are in the interests of the people of Scotland, we will support them.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): Does my hon. Friend share my concern that the Scotland Office Minister who will be dealing with agriculture and fisheries will be a member of the House of Lords, and therefore not open to scrutiny by this House? Does he agree that it is a shame that the Prime Minister does not think the new Tories are of sufficient calibre to hold such a position?

Ian Blackford: My hon. and learned Friend makes an extremely important point. I cannot imagine what some of the new Conservatives must make of it—they win an election, and then a colleague who could not unseat my hon. Friend the Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) is elevated to the House of Lords. Democracy in the United Kingdom—you lose an election, but you still end up in government. Not only that, but we also find—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for having to interrupt him, but Members should not chunter from a sedentary position, which is unparliamentary. [*Interruption.*] Order. Mr Jayawardena, calm yourself and try to restore your equilibrium. If you are calmer, it will be of benefit to you, probably to Hampshire and certainly to the House. There is quite a lot of eccentric gesticulation with hands taking place, not least among new Members. I hope they will be cured of this malady before long.

Ian Blackford: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I hope that new Members will appreciate your sage advice.

There is an important point here. A failed Conservative candidate is being elevated to the House of Lords and standing down from his position in the European Parliament, and the Conservatives seem to want to appoint to the European Parliament someone who was fifth on their list. [HON. MEMBERS: "They're getting sued."] They are getting sued by one of their own members. It is a very strange approach to democracy from the Scottish Conservatives.

Membership of the single market could not be more important for Scotland. It contains eight of our top 12 export destinations, supports 300,000 jobs in Scotland and contributes more than £11 billion to our economy. A hard Brexit would severely damage Scotland's economic, social and cultural interests and hit jobs and living standards deeply and permanently. That is why we are determined to avoid it—and that is true for the United Kingdom as well.

The Prime Minister must now reflect on the fact that her party stood on a platform of a hard Brexit that has been roundly rejected by the electorate. There is no mandate for a hard Brexit. It is the Scottish Government's compromise approach that has been endorsed by the Scottish Parliament and now by the people of Scotland as a manifesto commitment at the general election. My message to the Prime Minister is simple: it is time to listen. It is time to get back around the table with the devolved Governments of the United Kingdom and work out a compromise that works for all in the United Kingdom and avoids the devastating damage that a hard Brexit would cause.

Angus Brendan MacNeil: My hon. Friend will of course know that the Prime Minister is famous for her U-turns. She currently wants out of the single market and the customs union, but does he expect her to U-turn any time soon, before she takes the UK over a cliff edge? Scotland, of course, has its parachute for safety from the carnage that the Prime Minister is bringing.

Ian Blackford: I encourage the Prime Minister to listen. It is important that she reflects on what happened in the election. If she is prepared to do that, I would see it not as a U-turn, but as a Prime Minister beginning to show strong and stable leadership.

At the heart of the compromise must be continued membership of the single market. I gently suggest that Labour Members reflect on their position. Voters in Scotland will have sat aghast at the sight of a Labour shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, who is not in her place, who could not say whether she supported Scotland's voice being heard in the Brexit negotiations. To capitulate to the Conservatives on the single market would be to sell out working families whose wages and prospects will be ultimately damaged by a hard Brexit. My challenge to Labour is to join the Scottish National party in seeking to get the single market back on the table as the best option—the only option—for protecting jobs, the economy and living standards.

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): I agree with the hon. Gentleman's position on unfettered access to the single market, but would he like to comment on what the Prime Minister has said? She said that no deal is better than a bad deal, but the Chancellor has said that no deal is very bad. Both cannot be true—otherwise, a very bad deal would be better than a bad deal. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we need to get a deal in which we maximise jobs and access to the marketplace?

Ian Blackford: The hon. Gentleman has to speak to his Labour colleagues. If they want to stand up for the people of this country, they have to join the SNP in demanding that we remain members of the single market. That is the salient point.

The Queen's Speech fails not only on minimising the impact of Brexit. It fails even harder on reversing the damage caused by almost a decade of austerity. For this Tory Government, austerity cuts are not simply a policy response to a particular economic situation. They are an ideology and a political choice. *[Interruption.]* I hear somebody shouting "nonsense". Let me say politely to the Government that, in 2009, we embarked on a policy of quantitative easing. I suspect that all hon. Members supported the need to take monetary policy action in 2009. The situation now is that there has been £430 billion-worth of intervention in the markets. The point is that we have not taken the fiscal measures to deliver sustainable economic growth that had to sit hand in hand with the monetary policy action. We have underpinned the financial markets as a direct consequence of quantitative easing. Those with assets have done well. The financial markets have increased by more than 70% over those years. The tragedy is that real wages have declined. The responsibility for economic management rests with the Government. We have not looked after the working people of this country but have ensured that those with financial assets have done very well. That is the specific charge, and why the Government can and must change course.

That political choice has put certain groups of people in the crosshairs, including working families, those on low incomes just managing to get by, and the disabled and vulnerable who rely on support from social security. I use that phrase for a clear purpose. In Scotland, we talk about social security, but the Government in London talk about welfare. That is why they have a problem. They do not realise that it is about the importance of that safety net. Our society is simply as strong as its weakest link.

Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): Does my hon. Friend agree that those who are most under pressure will find it even worse if the Government continue their shambolic roll-out of the universal credit full service, which is ahead of schedule in the highlands and is hurting people deeply every day—those seeking work, the disabled and those who are working?

Ian Blackford: I commend my hon. Friend for his work in this area. I know that many constituents have come to him who are enormously affected by the changes. It is important that the Government reflect on the impact of the changes and that they change course.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Ian Blackford: I need to make some progress; I apologise.

We know that a decade of austerity will see the highest inequality since the Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher. While Tory Members might proclaim cuts to Government spending, they mean real pain and hardship for people across the country. The SNP has consistently opposed austerity and we are offering a credible alternative. Our approach to the public finances would balance the UK budget for day-to-day spending by the end of the Parliament. It would set debt on a downward path and, crucially, free up an additional £118 billion of public investment over the Parliament to grow the economy, safeguarding public services and

protecting household incomes—a clear alternative to five more years of Tory austerity; investment and hope, not more destructive cuts.

Those on low incomes who rely on in-work social security, and the vulnerable and the disabled, face a further £9 billion of additional social security cuts from this Tory Government. There is an alternative. Where Labour has only pledged to reverse less than a quarter of those cuts, SNP MPs will stand against all the further planned cuts to social security. Our pensioners, too, now face real pain from Tory austerity. The Government's intention to remove the triple lock and raid the winter fuel allowance will hit pensioners hard, at a time when their budgets are hard pressed. In the highlands of Scotland, 77% of pensioners are in fuel poverty. Until we have driven fuel poverty out of our society, we need to make sure that we are standing up for the rights of our pensioners.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): I just wonder whether the hon. Gentleman has factored the Barnett formula into the description that he has given of the finances in Scotland. Given that there is such a catastrophe in the Scottish finances at the moment, is the SNP still insisting that the Barnett formula has to be applied?

Ian Blackford: I find that quite extraordinary, because the real-terms cut to the Scottish budget over the last 10 years has been about £2.9 billion and it is simply because of Tory austerity. Yes, we support the Barnett formula, because it is applied on a needs basis. It is interesting that others have wanted to take it away. It is not the SNP who are a threat to the public finances in Scotland; it is those who want to attack the Barnett formula. Let me make it absolutely clear: in any back-door deal that is done with the DUP, if there is any increase in spending in Northern Ireland, which we would of course welcome, that must be reflected in the Barnett formula. Scotland must be protected by any deal that the Conservatives do.

SNP MPs will oppose the removal of the triple lock, so that our pensioners still see the pension that they worked for rise, and we will continue to support the WASPI women in their campaign to secure fairness. The Government must act with speed to address the WASPI issue. The Prime Minister and her Government must reflect on the circumstances that the WASPI women are in and put in place mitigation.

The most startling impact of austerity is the effect it has on children in working families. The incomes of the poorest third of working-age households will fall by 10% over the next four years, driving a further 1 million children across the United Kingdom into poverty. It was no wonder that in the last Parliament the previous Secretary of State for Work and Pensions wanted to redefine child poverty, because the numbers are quite simply eye-watering and shameful. By 2021, more than 5 million children across the UK—a number equivalent to the total population of Scotland—could be living in poverty, in one of the richest countries in the world. Above all, austerity erodes our public services, at a time when we need more than ever to ensure that our public services are well funded and delivering for people in our communities. In this Parliament, SNP MPs will champion our public services.

[*Ian Blackford*]

Over the past 10 years, the SNP Scottish Government have prioritised the health service and we will continue to do so. Our NHS, like health services across the world, faces real challenges. However, in Scotland, patient satisfaction is at record levels. Our hospital A&Es are the best performing in the United Kingdom. Many nurses in Scotland are better paid than in the rest of the UK. Our health service in Scotland will be £2 billion better off by the end of this Parliament. However, we want to go further. If the UK Government chose to increase health spending per head of population in England to the current Scottish level, which is 7% higher, that would mean more money for the NHS, not just in Scotland but across the UK. It would increase the health budget in England by £11 billion more than inflation by 2022, and it would deliver funds to support up to £1 billion of additional investment in Scotland's NHS.

Ensuring that everyone has a safe, warm and affordable home is central to the SNP Scottish Government's drive to make this country fairer and more prosperous. Over the last parliamentary term, the SNP Government invested more than £1.7 billion in affordable housing. We are delivering more than 30,000 new affordable homes, and our target is 50,000 affordable homes by the end of this Parliament.

High-quality and well-funded public services, a growing economy with investment in business, and a fairer and more equal country are the alternatives to austerity. Given that they were denied their majority by the public, I had hoped that this Queen's Speech might signal a Government who were more willing to listen and compromise, but I see scant evidence of that today.

In the last Parliament, the SNP was a real and effective opposition. It was the SNP that led the challenge to the proposed cuts in working tax credits which led to a coalition, here and elsewhere, that forced the Government to change course. It was my friend and colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss), who championed the campaign against the changes in tax credits for families with more than two children—what became known as the rape clause. We ask the Government again to revisit that issue.

Alison Thewliss: I thank my hon. Friend for mentioning the campaign against the rape clause. Does he agree that there is a great contrast between the Scottish Government's launch today of a social security system that describes social security as a human right and the fact that the rape clause breaches women's and children's human rights?

Ian Blackford: I absolutely agree. I see that the Prime Minister is present. I hope that she has listened very carefully to what my hon. Friend has said, and that the Government will reflect on the issue and deal with it in short order.

In conclusion—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hurray!"] I could happily go on.

Faced with a right-wing Tory Government pursuing an austerity agenda that they have little mandate to implement, the SNP will table its own amendment to the Queen's Speech, which will seek a change of direction towards the progressive policies that our public services and the economy need. In this Parliament of minorities,

the SNP will take every opportunity to further Scotland's interests. SNP Members will be prepared to work with parties throughout the House to deliver more progressive, fairer policies that will serve the interests of the people of this country. In this Parliament, SNP MPs will ensure that Scotland's voice is heard louder and clearer than ever before.

Mr Speaker: I call the Father of the House, Mr Kenneth Clarke.

4.57 pm

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford). I congratulate him on his elevation to the leadership of his somewhat diminished party, and congratulate him particularly on his fortitude in the face of the rather clear setback that his party suffered in the recent general election. I think I share some of his feelings, as my party has also lost some good colleagues. Scotland seemed to have a slightly different election campaign. I took the results in Scotland as a serious rebuff to the Scottish National party's one central cause of holding another referendum in an attempt to break up the Union of the United Kingdom, and I hope that it is terminal on this occasion. I assure my very welcome new friends from Scotland on this side of the House—[*Interruption.*] They are secure in my support. I assure them, and our friends in the Democratic Unionist party, that I am a stalwart supporter of the Union, and that, whatever happens in this Parliament, I shall certainly be unwavering in that support.

In England, however, this was a Brexit election. In fact, the public are slightly losing interest in the political bubble's debate about Brexit, and lots of other issues came into the election, but it was designed as a Brexit election, and I think that history will see it, and this Parliament, as such.

As I am entitled to somewhat less of the House's time than the leaders of the political parties—quite rightly—I shall confine my speech to the issue of Brexit. I should have liked more time in which to welcome the aspects of the speech made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that reflected, yet again, the liberal social conscience which I know she has, and her deep feeling for those who have not prospered enough during the periods of prosperity that we have experienced in this country recently. She recaptured the spirit of her Downing Street address.

I would also like to debate the national economy. I welcomed the sound principles—in my opinion the only possible principles—that she set out in describing how to tackle and get through the present uncertainties and get back to proper growth in a modern and competitive economy. However, I propose to confine my remarks to what history will regard, whatever happens in this Parliament, as the great, lasting work of this Parliament: what kind of deal we achieve as we leave the European Union.

In case anyone immediately starts to disagree with me on the basis that I am challenging the referendum, I point out that I never accepted that a referendum was a sensible way to proceed on such a huge and complex question. I regard the idea of having a second referendum, in case my side might win on this occasion, as a particularly foolish proposal. I thought this was a parliamentary

matter. I spoke and voted against the invocation of article 50. I accept that the majority in favour of invoking it was overwhelming on both sides of the House. For this Parliament, I accept that the matter is settled: we are definitely going to leave the European Union.

We now have to debate what we all agree in principle is the best deal we can obtain for the future special partnership with Europe and our new relationships—political and economic—with the rest of the world. The subject that we will have to consider as the Parliament proceeds was scarcely debated in any sensible way by the national leadership of either side in the referendum, as reported in the national media. Nor, I regret to say, was any particular debate in the general election devoted in any sensible way to the content of a new arrangement.

I could make a very long speech if I addressed every question—again, I have to be selective. We are right to concentrate at this moment, as the debate is beginning to do, on our economic relationships with the European Union, and the prospects for trade, investment and jobs. That is obviously most compelling. We must leave for a later stage the dozens of important questions that will arise on security, international crime, environmental standards and so on. At this moment, we are interested in how we will trade with Europe and what the relationships will be.

It is important that we do that because Brexit is already, through its short-term effects, making many people in this country, particularly the less well off, considerably poorer. The immediate effect of the vote was to cause a significant devaluation of sterling. International investors decided that the attractiveness of sterling assets was much less and that the prospects of the British economy were seriously damaged. The pound has fallen and stayed low, and that is feeding its way into inflation, which is exceeding the low wage growth in the economy. Investment is also stalling, so we are seeing a serious slowdown in growth and a drop in living standards, particularly among vulnerable communities. If there are those who believe that eventually we can get a deal that can reverse those things, the sooner we reach a sensible agreement on that and my right hon. Friend the Brexit Secretary pursues and achieves it, the better.

Sir William Cash: I just wondered, in the light of the extremely sensible remarks that my right hon. and learned Friend has made so far, whether he would follow up what he said on television at the weekend about not really seeing any reason why we should not stay in the single market. I think he said that he thought we should not leave the single market or the customs union. Does he want to say that now in the context of leaving the European Union as well?

Mr Clarke: I am about to address that very issue—it is one of the principal contents of the speech I propose to make. I am delighted to debate it again with my hon. Friend. We have debated these matters for a very long time, and I think he and I will eventually have to reach some sort of compromise—only when that is achieved will the votes of the Democratic Unionist party move the Government very far in the same direction. I will certainly bring him up to date with my views on the single market and the customs union, as that is precisely what I intend to go on to.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Clarke: I will give way to the hon. Member for Chesterfield (Toby Perkins), but then I will not give way again unless somebody is particularly pressing, if hon. Members will forgive me.

Toby Perkins: I thank the right hon. and learned Gentleman for giving way. He is absolutely right that the economy should be a priority. He has mentioned some of the things that might have to wait until further down the line, but he did not talk about immigration. Having spent a lot of time speaking to people in Chesterfield over the last few weeks, I know that if we end up with some kind of deal whereby we leave the EU but nothing changes in terms of immigration, many of the Brexit voters will feel that their vote for leaving the EU was very much given under false pretences.

Mr Clarke: I understand the political background to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but I get concerned that more and more Labour Members—perfectly reasonable ones—who represent constituencies in the north of England or the north midlands are now suddenly finding reasons for sounding rather anti-immigrant and putting forward that interpretation. We have a problem with immigration—I will address it—but we should not start feeding nonsense like the idea that EU nationals have lowered our living standards or are taking our jobs. The political temptation to start sounding a bit like the erstwhile UKIP opponent should be resisted, particularly by people in what used to be safe Labour seats in the north of England.

Let me turn to the question of the single market and the customs union. We are going to have to seek some compromise, so I start from the proposition that, as far as I am aware, there is not a single protectionist Member of Parliament sitting in this House. Everybody here declares their fervent belief in free trade. It was never always thus in this House. The only real protectionist on my side of the House was the late Alan Clark, which was rather odd as he was Minister for Trade at the beginning of the Uruguay round, although he was exceptional in many matters. The left wing of the Labour party in the days of Michael Foot was ferociously protectionist, as it was ferociously Eurosceptic—it was united with the old imperialist right in our party in opposing the European project.

I am never quite sure where the present Leader of the Opposition has gone to, because he and I have rather consistently stuck to the sort of views we both had when we entered this House many years ago—he a little later than me, but not much. He was one of the stoutest Bennite Eurosceptics in the House of Commons—it was a capitalist plot in those days. He has not exactly had a Pauline conversion. It is not bad, but I kept finding that he was speaking on the same side as me in the recent referendum, although he only seemed able to find arguments about resisting obscure threats to workers' rights, which I could not see were remotely an issue in the referendum we were holding. But I will accept what he says and his party's position, so I think that now he probably is in favour of free trade.

Particularly in the referendum, both sides in the campaign were united on the principles of free trade and open trading links with the rest of the EU. I think that everyone would agree that the leave side was led

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very robustly by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. He in particular was very anxious to dismiss the suggestion that the future of our trading relationships was remotely going to be affected by our leaving the EU—it was said that that was the politics of fear and scaremongering. He repeatedly explained that, as the Germans needed to sell us their Mercedes cars and as the Italians needed to sell us their Prosecco, our trading relationships were obviously going to remain completely unchanged. Indeed, at times, he and one or two others in the leave campaign seemed to imply that we did not really need trade agreements in order to trade in the modern world, as we would simply go out there and sell things. However, if we leave the European Union with no deal and we do not have all the EU trade deals that we have helped to negotiate over the years, we will for a time be the only country in the developed world that has absolutely no trade agreements with any other country. My right hon. Friend, with his usual breezy insouciance, seemed quite undisturbed by that spectacle, but I do not think that that is where we are now.

Let me begin by dealing precisely with the key issue that my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) raised. I hope that I can take it as a given starting point across the House that we will seek to achieve no new customs barriers, regulatory barriers or tariffs between ourselves and the rest of the European Union. Tariffs are important, but they are not as important as the other two for quite a lot of aspects of a modern economy. I take it that all sides agree that we shall not seek to put any obstacles of that kind in the way of future relationships.

In the present circumstances, I am anxious to demonstrate my agreement with our friends in the Democratic Unionist party. I share all their fervour that we should have an open border in Ireland. It would be an absolute catastrophe if we found ourselves closing that border again, with all the threats to the stability of Ulster and the Irish Republic that that would entail. Given that no one would argue in principle with what I have just said about no new tariffs, regulatory barriers or customs barriers, I find it odd that those on the two Front Benches are ostensibly agreed that we are going to leave the single market—that is difficult to understand in the case of Labour—and perhaps the customs union as well. I can only assume that either that is mere semantics, or that we are going to see considerable ingenuity in how we achieve what is to people of common sense on both sides of the channel a desirable goal, while at the same time withdrawing from the single market and the customs union.

I repeat that when we received our instructions from the people—to use the kind of phrase that the Eurosceptics are fond of—in the referendum, I do not recall the question of leaving the single market and the customs union being even remotely seriously raised. Certainly in the rather good debates that I had with intelligent Eurosceptics in village halls and so on, none of them ever suggested that we would do that. This is in line with my experience throughout my time in this House, during which every Eurosceptic has argued that there is nothing wrong with the common market. Every right-wing Tory has always been totally in favour of having close and open trading relations with the rest of Europe. The sole basis of their opposition was the politics of Europe, or their version of what they thought that was.

John Redwood *rose—*

Mr Clarke: I shall give way to my right hon. Friend, with whom I shall also have to seek compromise, as I am sure the Whips will tell us at some time during these debates.

John Redwood: The remain and leave campaigns agreed that we could not stay in the single market or the customs union, for a variety of good reasons. The first is that we want to have free trade agreements with other countries around the world, and we could not do that if we were in the single market or the customs union. Secondly, it was made very clear that we would have to make budget contributions and accept freedom of movement, which we have no intention of doing. That was one of the few things that the two campaigns agreed about, and we all told the British public that we would be leaving the single market and the customs union. That was repeated in the article 50 letter, and it was appreciated by the EU. It was also voted on and approved overwhelmingly by the House of Commons in the last Parliament. What part of that does my right hon. and learned Friend not understand?

Mr Clarke: Members in the Chamber will begin to think that, for the first time in my career here, there is collusion between myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Stone, and between myself and my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (John Redwood), because my right hon. Friend anticipates precisely my next point: the only reasons I have so far been given for the proposition—the European Union is bewildered by our approach—that we leave the single market and the customs union. The reason for leaving the customs union is, apparently, that we are desperately anxious to reach agreements with the wider world—[*Interruption.*] I am delighted to see my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, with whom I have always had the most amiable discussions about European issues, taking his place in the Chamber.

Everybody in the Conservative party has been advocating greater trade and better trading relationships with the wider world for as long as I have been here. The British Government were widely recognised over the past 40 years as being the Government in the EU who were the most fervent advocates of liberal economics and an open trading policy. British Governments played a very large part in instigating the many trade deals that the EU has entered into with partners around the world and in pressing the other member states to make progress on them—with considerable success. Of course, if you negotiate as the EU, you have considerable negotiating clout—we would have less on our own.

The last time I held office, towards the end of the coalition Government—I am taking a break in my political career at the moment—I was asked to lead for us on the EU-US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership deal, which, sadly, was a very difficult one to get. There was no more fervent advocate of the desirability of an EU TTIP deal than the then British Government, who were led by the Conservatives and in which most of my right hon. and hon. Friends who are now on the Front Bench served. That was our approach, and it is why in recent times we have achieved some extremely valuable free trade deals. The South Korea

deal is a spectacular one, and we have even opened negotiations with Japan, which is extremely important. Those deals will go when we leave the EU, unless we reinstate them, yet apparently we will be leaving the customs union to add to those deals. The only quick way in which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade will be able to achieve that—this is the first thing I would recommend—will be by suggesting to the other parties to our current deals that we could continue them on the basis that, as far as they are concerned, we are still in the customs union. We would therefore be asking the Koreans to accept that we would sign up to the terms that we had before, and that we would conduct ourselves as bound by the rules and subject to international arbitration—all the things that are essential to have any agreement with anybody. Otherwise, it will be a nightmare trying to reopen them all—

John Redwood: May I help my right hon. and learned Friend?

Mr Clarke: Ever helpful, I am sure.

John Redwood: I just want to reassure my right hon. and learned Friend that when partners split up and there are extant treaties, they novate to both sides so we will be able to inherit the treaty, as well as the rest of the EU will, unless the other side objects. I know of no other country that is going to object—they would want to keep the free trade agreement with the UK.

Mr Clarke: I am very reassured by that, because it means that in this global future, with all the new deals we wish to make—on the horizon that beckons before us of where we are going to go—in more than 50 countries we are going to continue on exactly the same footing as we are on now, taking on all the obligations of the existing EU trade deal and deriving all the benefits. I find that extremely reassuring, and my right hon. Friend and I should make an unlikely delegation to the Prime Minister to urge that upon her as the next step to take. I think the idea is—I will entirely welcome it, of course, when we are out of the EU—that we look forward to new trade deals negotiated with other countries, but I think we grossly underestimate the difficulty of doing that.

For example, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade visited the Philippines. He assured President Duterte how much we shared his values, which I found rather startling, but he was on a worthwhile mission of which I wholly approved, trying to pave the way for a proper free trade deal with the Philippines. It so happens that I have been to the Philippines several times: I have made political, ministerial and business visits, most of which have had, as part of their agenda, trying to promote trade and investment in the Philippines. It is not an easy market. The idea that we are going to make rapid progress in the Philippines should not take hold too strongly with my right hon. Friend and his colleagues. If he can make any worthwhile advances in less than a few years, it will be a quite remarkable achievement.

We might be able to get somewhere with New Zealand, and, when they have finished with TTIP, we might be able to get somewhere with President Trump's United States, but there will be difficulties even there. We must have an agreement with the New Zealanders. They are

our best friends in the world on this kind of subject, they run a very well-governed country, they are very well disposed to us, and they share our views on free trade. Nevertheless, their first demand will have to be the lifting of quotas and tariffs on lamb. That will pose problems for our troubled agricultural sector, so we had better prepare to handle that carefully.

The first demand of any American Administration—assuming we even get anywhere with the protectionist and isolationist current Administration—will be that we open up to their beef. Personally, I do not have any hang-ups about hormone-treated beef, but there will have to be some quite hard negotiations about exactly how far we are going to open up our market to the Americans, who are always anxious to get rid of their heavily subsidised agricultural produce. They will not regard us as strong bargaining partners in the situation we have put ourselves in. I shall not go on, but the whole idea of leaving the customs union has its limitations.

Similarly, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham chose to raise the question of our paying a financial contribution. Everybody is having to come to terms with that. I wish my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union well in the main negotiations at the moment and hope that he comes back with the best deal he can get, but he is not going to start the negotiations with the European Union on the basis that we repudiate all the legal, financial and treaty obligations that we have already signed up to, or without a proper, reasonable, objective division of assets and so on. I wish him well in getting a modest figure.

If we wish to have totally unfettered access to the market in the rest of the European Union, which I do, we are completely wasting our time if we turn up saying we are not going to make any contribution to the regional grants that are made to the less developed economies of, for example, eastern and central Europe, which is the basis on which those economies are prepared to enter into free trade with developed economies such as ours. No other country has an agreement with the EU that does not involve a contribution of that kind.

The reason usually given is that we wish to have more control of our borders and deal with the free movement of labour—the point made by the hon. Member for Chesterfield (Toby Perkins). I quite accept that we have a political problem in this country on the subject of immigration; we need to accept that in a serious, professional and civilised manner. I do not have personal hang-ups about immigration—it is certainly no question of culture, race, or anything of that kind, as far as I am concerned. I think British society is very much stronger, healthier and more interesting nowadays than it was in my childhood. I now live very contentedly in a multi-ethnic, multicultural, international society, and I think that is the way the 21st century is going to go in every developed country in the world.

The problem is the numbers of people coming here, but the problem is not, in my opinion, the numbers of other EU nationals in particular. That was not the surge in feeling that lay behind a lot of the votes in the referendum. There are people who do not like foreign languages being spoken on the bus, but I think that they are outnumbered.

It is undoubtedly the case—it is a fairly easy case to make—that EU nationals of all the ethnic groups in this country are the most likely to be in productive and

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valuable work and the least likely to be claiming benefit, and they are allowed here on the basis that they will take work. Since the referendum, there has been more serious discussion about the devastating effect it would have on various sectors of our economy and key public services if we started, with new rigorous controls, excluding EU nationals from coming here.

I have just had for the first time in my life first-hand experience of the best of the national health service, and the multinational teams who dealt with me at every level contained a very high proportion of EU nationals. The public do not actually get upset about German academics or Romanian nurses or Polish building workers; it is the sheer numbers of other immigrants who come here. UKIP, in its dog-whistle campaigning, always campaigned with posters showing brown or black people trying to enter this country. They never explained that for the huge numbers of people wanting to come here from Africa, the middle east, Afghanistan and so on it was an entirely sovereign decision for the United Kingdom whether they were given legal status to live here and nothing whatever to do with our membership of the European Union, which does not make the faintest difference.

I am quite clear that this country should behave in a civilised and responsible way towards the world's poor, that we should certainly honour our international law commitments on this subject—on the law of asylum and so on—but we have to reassure people who decided to vote leave because they saw all those pictures of people on the beaches of Libya, and thought our borders had been lost and that it had something to do with the EU that so many of them were trying to come here. In fact, I think, a lot of the problem is not caused by the EU; it is a problem we share with the other nations of northern Europe in particular. Lots and lots of young men take the family savings and risk their lives paying people smugglers, and they mainly head for Germany, Sweden or the United Kingdom. We have been co-operating, and we should continue to do so, with the other member states on issues such as tackling the problem of crossing the Mediterranean, and sealing the outer European border but controlling it in a way that lets in people whom we need or to whom we have an obligation, moral, legal or otherwise. The idea that leaving the European Union means that people will stop trying to get across from Calais or Ostend is an illusion.

More importantly, our big problem, which is normally shoved under the carpet but has been mentioned several times in the media recently, is the huge number of undocumented illegal immigrants in this country. Nobody knows how many there are, but estimates vary between 400,000 and 1 million. Not surprisingly, following the recent horrific tragedy quite a number of them turned out to be living in this tower in North Kensington where we saw such appalling, heart-rending scenes.

All over the country, they are there. They are camping out near the channel ports. British people smugglers are bringing them in. There are people who have been refused asylum but have never left, people who have overstayed their visas. That is the real problem, but how do we deal with it in a way that is not merely cruel and inhuman? It is a tremendously difficult problem. We cannot just deport people who are probably using a false name, who are probably not giving their genuine

nationality. We have to try to persuade some country to take them back because we want to deport them, but that country will deny that they want these people or that they are anything to do with them.

To start concentrating on freedom of movement of labour and trying to put in unnecessary barriers to people who, as every study shows, have been making a positive contribution to the economy of this country for most of the past few decades, is a substitute for facing up to the enormous problems of reassuring our public that we are not sacrificing our humanitarian values but we do understand that we cannot take the world's poor and that we need some system to address that.

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Con): I am very grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for giving way. I join him in congratulating all the medical staff in Nottingham, essentially for putting him back together again and making sure that his health is even better than it was before, as we can see in all the rigor of his arguments. May I say how much I agree with everything that he says? Does he agree that one of the great tragedies of recent events, in terms of the politics that we face, is that none of those arguments has been made, not only outside the House but in the Chamber? I do not know for how many years we have failed to have an honest debate about immigration. If we had started here, then had the debate out in our communities, we might not find ourselves in the unfortunate situation that we are clearly in.

Mr Clarke: I agree entirely with my right hon. Friend. We live in a celebrity culture where the referendum was essentially the Boris and Dave show, with very little serious content. The general election had a lot of slogans, and billions of pounds were going to be spent on everything that emerged as a problem, but it was remarkably bereft of policy discussion in the media—that approach is seen not just in Parliament—and in debate. That is a wider issue: in the politics of Nottinghamshire we try to keep up standards, but in the House we need to return to treating these things seriously.

Briefly, because I have taken far longer than I intended, we have to approach this on a cross-party basis. Both the major parties are hopelessly split on the issue. We have just demonstrated that, and the Labour party is equally split. The idea that we will continue in power by getting my right hon. Friends and me to agree on some compromise, subject to a veto on every significant vote to be exercised by the Democratic Unionists, which will give us a small majority in the House, is not the way to have a strong mandate for the Brexit negotiations that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was seeking in the election.

The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr David Davis) rose—

Mr Clarke: As I wish my right hon. Friend to have a strong mandate, I will break with what I just said and, for the last time, give way.

Mr Davis: I want to take my right hon. and learned Friend back to his comments on migration. He described the referendum as the Boris and Dave show. It certainly was not the Ken and David show. Neither of us spoke much about immigration in the referendum campaign, but the simple truth is that if we look back over the 20 years since the growth in migration from the east—the

then Labour Government did not have a transitional arrangement—the concern of the public at large, not just small groups or people who are bigots, about migration generally went from next to nothing to 80%. It is a little wider, I think, that he has described. There are real problems and issues that require us to behave in a civilised manner, but I think that we should treat that respectfully. We are trying to get a resolution that respects that and delivers an economic outcome that we deserve.

Mr Clarke: I agree with my right hon. Friend. I always credit him with consistently sound principles. I have the same respect for him that I have for the two right hon. Friends who have interrupted me. [*Interruption.*] No—I mean that genuinely, as they have not been on all sides at various times. They have argued consistently, in a principled way, with knowledge of the European Union all the way through. There is always an element in politics—we have to have this—where some people change, quite rapidly sometimes, according to the latest headline or the prospect of promotion or whatever it might be. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union cannot be accused of that, and neither can I. I credit him, too, for not using any of the daft arguments during the referendum. I do not remember him saying that 70 million Turks were coming to molest our womenfolk and take our jobs. He did not say that there would be £350 million a week to spend on the national health service—the two big arguments of the national leaders—and I did not use the daft ones on our side either. The result was that we hardly got reported—nobody took any notice, because the national media were not remotely interested.

It is obvious that we are going to have to have some cross-party appeal now, and there are important reasons for that. The Labour party will be tempted by another election. So many Labour Members I know are still pinching themselves at the fact that they are still in the House. I quite accept that the Leader of the Opposition had a personal triumph, but I point out that Labour is still miles from forming a Government. It has 50 fewer seats than the Conservative party, and its chances of forming a coalition with the Democratic Unionist party, the Liberals or the Scottish Nationalist party on the kind of platform it stood on are absolutely nil.

I also think that another general election would be an appalling risk. The public do not like any party. I have never known such—ill-founded, I think—adolescent cynicism to be so widespread among the electorate, who treat the political class with growing contempt. Are we going to start playing party games and have another election when they are so volatile? About 20% of the population changed their minds in the last fortnight of the campaign. It was not with deep conviction: most of them were reassured that they could cast a protest vote for the Labour party without any risk of its winning and taking power. Another election would be a bigger gamble than the last one, with no certain outcome.

We in this House have to prove that occasionally our tribalism can subside and that we are capable of putting the national interest above the short-term knockabout of discredited party politics. The French have been saved by President Macron. They have got rid of both their long-established parties—they cannot stand either of them. A new, hopeful person has emerged from the centre or centre-left. Heaven knows whether he can

succeed, although I very much hope that he does. We went in the opposite direction. The two parties surged in support—the electorate went back to the old two parties, but I do not think that they were deeply convinced by the arguments that either was using during the election. Heaven knows what they would do if this Parliament failed or collapsed or some stupid party vote took place and there was another general election. That would be a lottery from which we might all lose.

Let us show that we can rise above things. I am glad to know that channels are already open to the Liberals and the Labour party—as well as the Scottish Nationalist party, I am sure. We do not really know the basis on which we are negotiating Brexit at the moment; I think it will have to be carried by what I think would be an extremely sensible cross-party majority that the House could easily command if we were able to put in place some processes to achieve it.

5.37 pm

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): It is an honour to follow a wise speech, and in my shorter contribution I may reflect on some of the points made in it.

I should also like to pay my respects to two colleagues who departed in the past 12 months. The losses of Gerald Kaufman and Jo Cox were deeply and strongly felt. Both people made huge contributions to this place, their constituencies and our wider community. Gerald Kaufman's career in this place lasted as long as I have been alive. We do not just reflect on his great contribution to the Labour party and our national public life but contrast that with the single, solitary year that Jo Cox spent in this place; in so many ways, she made as big an impact. It is right that we celebrated her life and values in the recent Great Get Together. I hope that that will continue for many years to come as we stand by her, her family and her legacy.

I should also refer to some of the appalling events that have taken place in this country in the past few weeks.

The Grenfell Tower tragedy left many of us utterly speechless. The sense of appalling tragedy, the horror that those people had to go through, and the immense personal loss—the loss of loved ones, the loss of everything—is something we can barely imagine. But there is something very different about this tragedy, in that it is a source—I feel it myself, if I am honest—of great anger. Whatever we say and whatever we do, the implications of what happened—the loss of dozens and dozens of lives—is that some lives in our society are apparently worth less than others. That is how that outrage came to take place, and we must learn from it and take action to demonstrate we have learned from it.

We have all spoken at length about the three terrorist incidents—Finsbury Park just recently, London Bridge and Manchester—and about our horror and outrage at what happened. But let us remember what terrorists seek to do: they seek to divide us, and our response must be to be united. I went to the Muslim welfare centre next to Finsbury Park mosque last night, and among the people I met I had the honour of meeting Mohammed, the young imam, whose dignity shone out on the night of the attack, and who actually protected the assailant from a very dangerous situation. That is a

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reminder that, when we speak about the different communities in our country, we must do so with care, with love and with inclusion.

It is not just us in politics who should use language in that way, as the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) rightly pointed out. Dare I say gently that our friends in the media must also be immensely careful about how they report such incidents and, indeed, all matters to do with community relations in this country? If a person living in a non-diverse part of the United Kingdom gets their information about community relations, terrorism and risks only from certain newspapers, they will end up believing that there are problems that, perhaps, there are not, and demonise others when there is absolutely no place for that. We have to work incredibly hard, in uniting our communities, to use language that is right and inclusive, and to make sure we do not allow those who seek to damage and divide us to actually win.

Mr Nigel Evans: The hon. Gentleman started his speech by paying tribute to Jo Cox and Gerald Kaufman. I hope he does not mind if I also mention Paul Keetch. Paul, who was a comrade of ours, was a Member of Parliament for many years. He retired through ill health and, sadly, died just before the general election. He is somebody we will miss greatly.

Tim Farron: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that. Paul stepped down from the House in 2010, but he was a friend and colleague of mine. I am bound to say that, among his many other achievements, he was the defence spokesperson for the Liberal Democrats during the Iraq war. People will remember—wrongly—that the Liberal Democrats took the popular side in opposing the Iraq war, but we did not: we took the unpopular side. Sometimes it is important to do right, and Paul Keetch sat on the Front Bench, next to the equally late and great Charles Kennedy, making that case at that very difficult time for our country.

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): May I just reinforce the hon. Gentleman's message about Imam Mohammed Mahmoud? His words—that, by God's grace, they managed to stop the attacker being attacked and prevent worse things from happening—should be in everyone's mind. Heaven knows what would have happened if the attacker had suffered serious damage. The headlines would have been very different, so we owe a great deal to that imam and people like him.

Tim Farron: We absolutely do, and he is an example of what genuinely unites us and of our love and concern for others. Indeed, he reflects the values of the colossal majority of Muslim people in this country, and it is important that we reflect that.

In their absence, let me also pay tribute to the humorous, witty and wise remarks of the mover and the seconder of the response to the Gracious Speech, and move on to my own remarks, which I promise will not be all that lengthy—whether they are wise, Members can judge at the end.

The Prime Minister is not in her place now; she is entitled not to be. She and I have a lot in common. We both contested North West Durham in 1992, and neither of us won; we both led our parties in the recent general election, and neither of us won; and soon neither of us will be leading our parties any more, but at least I have

got the honesty to admit it publicly. Britain, for all its immense and glorious heritage, its potentially wonderful future, and all its tremendous values, is nevertheless a country in a mess. It is essentially a mess caused by two choices made by two Conservative Prime Ministers who put their party before their country. First, David Cameron called a referendum on Europe for no other reason than to attempt to put a sticking plaster between two sides of the Conservative party. Secondly, our current Prime Minister thought she could gain narrow party advantage by calling a snap election. Pride comes before a fall. It is tempting to be amused at the hubris turned to humiliation that has now come upon the Conservative party, but the problem is that this is a mess that damages Britain—that damages the future for all of our children.

So, to the Gracious Speech. Her Majesty has launched many ships in her time, but never such an empty vessel as the one today. I am not sure whether wasting the monarch's time is a treasonous act; I hope for the Prime Minister's sake it is not. The Queen's Speech shows that we have a Government who have lost touch with their people and lost touch with reality. If they have the first, foggiest idea of what the will of the people is now, they have chosen to ignore it. Why is there no additional investment in health or social care? As two in three of our head teachers across our country in the next few weeks are having to lay off teaching staff, why is there no plan to cancel the £3 billion-worth of cuts to our schools?

Norman Lamb (North Norfolk) (LD): I very much agree with what my hon. Friend is saying. He mentioned that there is no extra funding for health. The Queen's Speech makes reference to prioritising mental health within the NHS. Does he share my horror at the gap between the rhetoric and the reality? The reality is that the constraints that NHS England is putting on many areas of the country mean that mental health is losing out here and now, not being prioritised as the Queen's Speech claims.

Tim Farron: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right; he speaks with immense experience and capability, and a record in this area. This is a reminder that warm words from the Government are not sufficient when hard cash is not present. During the election, my party offered the British people the opportunity, which of course they did not take, to place a penny on income tax in order to pay for real investment in health and social care, including, as a priority, mental health. I say that because somebody needs to be honest with the British people that if we want the best health and social care in the world, then we will have to pay for it.

John Redwood: I guess we ought to explain to those listening to this debate that Her Majesty never gives public spending statements. I think there will be more money for health and education, and that will be announced at another time by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This is a list of laws we are going to pass. Does the hon. Gentleman not see how significant the Brexit law is?

Tim Farron: I will come to that in a moment. The Gracious Speech is nevertheless a statement of the Government's priorities. Given the conversation that we rightly have about our security as a country, the fact that the Government are not seeking to do something

to strengthen in number our police force—the most obvious way of making sure we are all kept safe—beggars belief.

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): I hate to rain on the hon. Gentleman's parade, but will he remind us whether, when he was in coalition with the Conservative Government, he raised any of the points around, for example, the cuts in police funding, or objected to, for example, the non-prioritisation of mental health and other spending?

Tim Farron: The short and blindingly obvious answer is yes. The fact that no savings were made in the security services' funding whatsoever is testament to that, as is the fact that we have in my right hon. Friend the Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) the person who has done most in living memory to advance mental health in this country from a Government Bench.

As is very clear from recent statements and from the Gracious Speech, the Prime Minister has sought to pursue, and continues to seek to pursue, an extreme version of Brexit, having failed to gain any mandate to do so. There is, as the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe mentioned, no plan to keep Britain in the single market or the customs union. We will therefore seek to amend the Queen's Speech to add membership of the single market and the customs union. We are pleased to hear that 50 colleagues from the Labour party take a similar view, believing that we should be members of the single market. Access to the single market is a nonsense; many countries around the world have access to the single market. I could be wrong, but I think North Korea has access to the single market. The issue is: are we members of that market?

The right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe pointed out earlier that apparently we all believe in free trade now. Do not believe what people say; believe what they do. People may say, "We are in favour of free trade now," but if they vote in these Lobbies in the coming weeks and months for us not to be members of the single market—and therefore not just to rip up our biggest free trade deal, which is with the largest and most valuable economy on the planet, but, as a consequence, to rip up the deals that we have at second hand with North Korea and the rest of it—they are not free traders.

Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op): I have a genuine inquiry for the hon. Gentleman. If we were to retain membership of the single market and the customs union, what, in his view, would be different about that arrangement in comparison with being a member of the European Union?

Tim Farron: I think I am right in saying that the hon. Gentleman and I both indicated during the referendum campaign that, according to those who cited Norway as a model, in such a situation we would get the economic benefits of being in the European Union, but none of the political ones. We would not get decision-making powers, and all the rest of it. Norway was always the least-dreadful option on the menu if we were to leave the European Union, and it remains so. I am all in favour of the least-dreadful option, if we cannot have absolutely the best one.

It is fair to say that the lack of clarity over the version of Brexit that the Government are pressing for and pursuing is alarming. What does success look like? What does a bad deal look like? Nobody knows, because the Government's plan is as clear as mud, and the only details we have had are empty platitudes. The Government today have presented us with a number of so-called Brexit Bills on immigration, customs and agriculture, but how on earth can we be expected to support these things when we have no idea what the end goal is? The majority of people in this country did not put their faith in the Government at the ballot box, and it would be dangerous for any Member of this House to put blind faith in these Brexit Bills without full details of what they will mean for our borders, our trade, our security and our jobs.

As the Brexit Secretary begins the horse-trading and concession-making with politicians in Brussels, the fact is that we are no closer to knowing what Brexit will look like. Those who have expressed concern about this House and the people of this country having insufficient sovereignty over the law of this country must, surely, see the irony in our children's and grandchildren's future being stitched up in vape-filled rooms in Brussels and imposed on the British people, without a single inhabitant of this country—outside this House—having any say whatsoever. And yet the Prime Minister still refuses to give the people the final say on that deal, with the right to reject it and remain if they do not think that it is a good deal.

The Prime Minister may pretend that it is business as usual, but clearly that is not the case. She wanted a landslide, but the people said no. She wanted a mandate for her plans for an extreme version of Brexit, but the people rejected that, too. She promised strong and stable leadership, but no Government have ever looked weaker or less in control. The Prime Minister has gone cap in hand to the DUP and tried to stitch up a deal to keep her in power, and now it is making her look like a fool as well.

James Heappey (Wells) (Con): The hon. Gentleman criticises our approach to the DUP. His party has long advocated coalitions, but now that it thinks them not politically expedient it has abandoned faith in them altogether. For how long will the Liberal Democrats' moratorium on coalitions last?

Tim Farron: We are a party that believes in pluralism. We simply reflect on the appalling nature of first past the post, which gives such unstable and unbalanced electoral outcomes. Perhaps we should change the system.

There have been many things said about the DUP. I will make one observation, which I hope people will consider to be neutral and honest. Peace in Northern Ireland was incredibly hard-won, at great cost. All active politicians in Northern Ireland, including those who are sitting behind me now, are owed great credit for that achievement. The difficulty is simply this: the current minority Government will be perceived to have taken sides for the first time in decades. That is a responsibility that the Government, the Prime Minister and the DUP will need to deal with as we seek to maintain that hard-won peace.

[Tim Farron]

To return to the point that was made a moment ago, I made it clear throughout the election campaign that my party would do no deals and form no coalitions, and that we would support a Queen's Speech only if we felt that it was in the interests of the country.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): The hon. Gentleman's argument has been employed by a wide range of people. Does he accept, however, that as a party elected to this national Parliament to represent the people of Northern Ireland, we have every right to play as full a part as we choose? Whether we decide that that means supporting the Conservative party or sitting on these Benches, that is our right, and that is what we were elected to do.

Tim Farron: For what it is worth, I absolutely accept all that. However, DUP Members do not need me to tell them how sensitive perceptions are. The reality is one thing, but perceptions might as well be reality. My concern is how this will be viewed, and what it means for this most sensitive time in the history of Northern Ireland and, in fact, of the island of Ireland. We all ought to be concerned about that. I do not say that to make a partisan point, or to deny DUP Members the right to represent their constituents or, should they choose to do so, to form some kind of arrangement with the current Government.

We, as Liberal Democrats, could have supported a Queen's Speech that set out a Brexit negotiating position that would keep us in the single market and the customs union, with a referendum on the final deal once all matters were negotiated. A cross-party approach to the negotiations should have been pursued in the first place. I have called in recent days for a joint Cabinet Committee, to be chaired and led by the Prime Minister and to include Labour Members, Liberal Democrats and nationalists into the bargain, so that a deal could be negotiated on behalf of us all. We would have voted for a Queen's Speech that set out a real-terms increase in schools funding, gave a cash injection to the NHS and social care and invested an extra £300 million in police officers to keep us safe, as we had argued for. We would have voted for a Queen's Speech that set out real action on climate change and air pollution and supported renewable energy. But that is not the Queen's Speech that the Prime Minister has set out, and so my party will not support it.

Mr Speaker: The opening speeches—although they were, of course, of undiluted magnificence—have taken a little longer than I might reasonably have expected, and therefore it might become necessary before long to impose a formal time limit. There are, I ask the House to accept, good reasons why I do not wish to impose a formal time limit at this point, but I would ask for a degree of self-restraint and for Members to consider the merit of a speech not exceeding 10 minutes. I feel sure that that exacting test can be met with ease by someone of the consummate intellectual brilliance of the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve).

5.58 pm

Mr Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is a pleasure to participate in this debate. As somebody who was accused during the election campaign of being a red Tory—I think my late father

would have found that a strange and vile epithet to be hurled at me—I must say that I was greatly reassured by listening to the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke). As he touched on many of the subjects that I wanted to talk about, I immediately tried to identify areas of disagreement that I might have with him, and I rather failed to do so. In contrast, I listened very carefully to the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron), but notwithstanding the fact that I rather hoped I would find myself in agreement with him, much of the tone that he adopted—it was of a rather carping and sanctimonious kind—emphasised to me why I am in the Conservative party and not somewhere else.

There is much to welcome in the Queen's Speech. It has rightly been pointed out that it was the speech of a liberal Conservative; it encompasses liberal Conservative values. Among the key issues that we will be addressing are counter-extremism, dealing with personal data, trying to improve community cohesion by introducing special advocates and public advocates to act in cases of disasters, and working to improve general community relations and the way in which our communities operate. Those are all matters that I greatly welcome and in which I hope to participate. Recently, I have been chairing a commission for Citizens UK on Muslim participation in public life in this country and the report is due to be published on 3 July. I hope that that will make a sensible contribution to a key issue for our wellbeing and our future.

The Government were absolutely right to highlight at the start of the Queen's Speech that the priority has to be the careful management of Brexit because, contrary to the views expressed by a few of my colleagues to whom I have spoken since the election, it seems to me that Brexit was, without the slightest doubt, the single key issue in how the election was conducted, the reasons behind it and, indeed, the inconclusive outcome, which was in one sense unsatisfactory. It is the elephant in the room; it is the man on the stair who wasn't there. Even when people sought to discuss other issues, in truth it all came back to the anxieties and concerns, whether in the business community or for individuals, about our collective future precipitated by this single revolutionary act.

I appreciate that revolutionary acts can be conducted by people who believe profoundly that they are acting in the name of traditional values, but revolutionary it undoubtedly is. One only has to look at the Queen's Speech and see that by the third paragraph we are into the lawyerly detail that will have to be crunched through to achieve even the legal formalities of departure to appreciate the mammoth task we have taken on. Lurking behind it is the key issue of whether our economic wellbeing survives the process and whether the promises that have been made by some in this House of a better tomorrow because of the liberation it will give us are capable of being delivered. Nearly 12 months since Brexit was voted on, I am afraid that I have no greater confidence that we will achieve such a satisfactory outcome than I had at the time the referendum took place. Indeed, on the economic indicators that are developing, which are the direct result of Brexit, it seems to me, speaking bluntly, that the omens are not particularly good.

All of us in this House have a responsibility—it is one of the reasons I was elected—to provide quiet government. Obviously, quiet government does not mean rolling

over and doing nothing in the face of challenge. There may be times when we ought to ask people to make sacrifices. However, it troubles me that the one thing that came out of this election was the unquiet state of the country and the extent to which politics generally, including the electorate's participation in it, had clearly failed to deliver outcomes over the course of the past 12 months that were satisfactory to people, whether it was the young turning out in force to vote at the last minute as a protest because they had not bothered to vote at all in the referendum last year, according to the available evidence, or the willingness to embrace radical policies and solutions that, frankly, do not stand close scrutiny.

The economic package offered by the Labour party in this election was economically illiterate and would have faced this country with financial ruin. Its attractiveness, in my view, was the direct result of the fact that people could no longer see that there was any plan to end austerity and bring a better future to this country, because we compromised that by landing ourselves with massive problems as a result of the way we voted in the referendum last year.

How, then, do we get ourselves out of that problem? First, to agree entirely with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe, I accept the verdict of the electorate—it cannot be undone. As I have said consistently in this place, we have to implement Brexit. However, what we do will determine whether our economic wellbeing is maintained and, with it, our ability to deal with all those other legitimate subjects of debate, such as whether we can provide better public services. Our public services have undoubtedly been under massive pressure for a very long time, precisely because this country finds great difficulty in paying its way—a conundrum that no political party has ever succeeded in resolving.

When I look at all this, it is not the starting point of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Lancaster House speech that I question. If she can achieve the Lancaster House speech and if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union can succeed in the negotiations and bring about the package that was identified, we will all have good occasion to rejoice. However, the fact of the matter is that at some point in the next two years, this House will have to start thinking about what happens if we cannot achieve that package. In the lovely way that we do in this country, we push that issue further and further down the road and hope it will go away, but it will not. I am not optimistic that the entirety of the package is obtainable. In fact, I think much less than the totality of it will be available because of the way in which the EU works and because the preservation of its identity means that it cannot give us the special status that we are asking for.

Then, Mr Speaker, we will have to make choices. In that matter, particularly in view of the inconclusive result of the election, the totality of opinion in this House will start to matter very much. We will have to determine whether, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe said, it is better to maintain the best free trade arrangement we can have with our closest partners, on whom we are economically massively interdependent, or to sacrifice that for potentially attractive restorations of control that, in my view, amount to very little indeed when subjected to rational analysis. Even if

they are successful, we will still need migrants if we are economically successful. The separate issue of global population increase and our ability to grapple on that front internationally is the key question. I think that we could have lovely trade agreements with large numbers of countries, but they would not be a substitute for losing the trade agreements with the countries with which we are most intimately associated.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): Given that the right hon. and learned Gentleman feels that there is a risk that the package will not deliver in any substantial way, why is he holding out against the idea that the people might want to have a second say on whether to proceed with such a bad package?

Mr Grieve: As I have said before, I see no sign that public opinion on Brexit has changed. I have no idea whether it will change in the future, but we have to proceed on the basis that we have to honour the commitment to take ourselves out of the EU. I am committed to supporting the Government in doing that. The question is how we go about it and how, within this House, we succeed in co-operating with each other—or not—to bring it about.

In my view, everything else in politics is subordinate to this issue, because most of the other legitimate issues that are being aired in this Queen's Speech debate, whether it be social policy, housing, health and safety issues—a subject I know a bit about because I used to prosecute for the Health and Safety Executive—and what may be going wrong in that domain, whether it is fire regulations or anything else, are incapable of being fully addressed until we sort out this key matter. Ultimately, it will be toxic to our political system if we do not come up with the right answers. What I picked up in the election was how the mounting frustration with politics and politicians as a class continues to grow, precisely because we cannot produce that coherent response.

I am sorry to have to say this to those on the Labour Front Bench, but I listened to the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) talking about rage. People are entitled to be angry about lots of things, but I thought that one of the things that we were, in part, deriving from the murder of Jo Cox was that anger followed by rage is usually the precondition to violence. That is something we have seen in this country not just in her murder but in other incidents. Yet we are now reduced to a position where Labour Front Benchers apparently see rage as a key thing to introduce to politics. How will we reach consensual agreements on key subjects concerning this country's future if we are mired in that sort of rhetoric?

I do not want to take up more of the House's time, but I simply want to say that I wish the Government well in what they are trying to do on Brexit. I will give them my support—not unqualified, but I will try as a Back Bencher to be helpfully critical. I appreciate that we are going, and I want to work with other Members to try to achieve a sensible outcome that does not damage our economic wellbeing and national security, both of which are at risk. I then want us to be able to start focusing on the issues that matter very much to people in how their daily lives are shaped. We are blessed in this country in that on the whole, despite our mistakes, we succeed in managing fairly competent government—that

[Mr Grieve]

applies as much to Members on the Opposition Benches as to ourselves. Frankly, if we do not get this right, we will be in very serious trouble. The question is how Parliament goes about ensuring that we come to the right outcome.

6.11 pm

Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): As ever, it is a pleasure to follow the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve). I thank him for his thoughtful contribution and want to pick up on a couple of the points that he made.

Overall, this is a very thin Queen's Speech. It avoids big issues, some of which I want to talk about, particularly education, housing and health. I will come to those, but Brexit is clearly the dominant issue for this Parliament, and it is notable that the speeches preceding mine have focused almost entirely on it.

Before I talk about Brexit, though, I think it is right that I thank the voters of Hackney South and Shoreditch for returning me for the fourth time as a Labour and Co-operative MP. I was returned with 79% of the popular vote—a sign not of my personal popularity, but of people's great impatience with austerity. There was no light at the end of the austerity tunnel for many of my constituents. While many people describe my area as achingly cool, in many parts it is still achingly poor.

People were pleased to see the Labour manifesto offering a glimmer of hope, but they were mightily concerned about Brexit as well. Some 78% of them voted to remain in the European Union last year, but now they do not even know what the Government are proposing in the negotiations on leaving. That approach risks a Brexit that will damage the British economy, jobs and living standards. We already see the pound 50% lower against the dollar and 10% down against the euro since the decision was made a year ago, and in April inflation rose to 2.6%, its highest rate for three and a half years. Constituents on the doorsteps said that they were noticing their shopping being more expensive, and that is just the beginning of the impact. It is vital that the Government set out a clear agenda for what they want to achieve.

There are two issues that I think are absolutely essential, one of which is the single market. I would prefer us to maintain membership, but at the very least we need access to it, for all the reasons that the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) eruditely explained, which I do not need to repeat. The other is EU citizens in my constituency, who still greet me on the doorstep in tears, a year later, because of the Government's woeful delay in deciding their future. It is heartening that there are press reports that there might be some fast-track measure, but there was nothing about that in the Queen's Speech.

The right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield picked up a point about the great repeal Bill, and we need to be careful about that. The Queen's Speech identified a few items that the Government will particularly focus on, but this is the Government who promised to reduce quangos, and the Bill runs the risk of creating more as we transpose many regulations from European law to British law. The Queen's Speech referred to nuclear, but we could also talk about medicines or animal rights. All those issues will have to be transposed. Frankly,

if there is another general election and hon. Members lose their seat, I suggest that they go for a public appointment, because many bodies will have to be created in order to deliver that law. That, however, gives no comfort to my constituents who are worried about the cost of living.

The issue of costs and budgets brings me to education. The Government promise in the Queen's Speech that they will

“work to ensure that every child has the opportunity to attend a good school”.

All children in my constituency attend a good or outstanding school, but my constituents are very angry about education. I have now fought four general elections in my constituency, and several elections prior to that in other places, and I have never seen such a groundswell of anger from parents, teachers and pupils—so much so that there were seven assemblies in Hackney one Friday during the election campaign. The people there were ordinary parents, not political activists—not that there is anything wrong with political activists—who were galvanised into action by the threat to our children's future.

During the work that we have done in the Public Accounts Committee, which I had the privilege of chairing in the last Parliament and hope to chair again, the Government have kept telling us that the overall schools budget in England is going up and has been protected in real terms. However, they have not provided for an increase in funding per pupil in line with inflation. On average, that will rise from just over £5,440 in 2015-16 to £5,519 in 2019-20, which is a real-terms reduction.

Added to that, there is the proposal to change the funding formula—there has been some indication that that might be changing but, again, no details. The change would mean that schools in my borough of Hackney would lose 2.8% of their funding—the highest percentage cut in the country alongside that to two or three other London boroughs—which would be more than £5 million a year. Our schools are among the best in the country, thanks to the investment of previous Governments, and it would be short-sighted and frankly bonkers to cut that away now.

We can add to that the existing efficiency savings that schools are being expected to make, which the Public Accounts Committee looked at only a few months ago. That £3 billion of savings, which needs to be found by 2020, includes £1.7 billion through the more efficient use of staff—we know that that already means that teachers and classroom assistants are losing their jobs—and £1.3 billion through more efficient procurement. I am all for efficiencies and for spending every tax pound as efficiently as possible, because we can then spend what we save on other things, but these are often false economies. One headteacher in my constituency is looking at four-and-a-half-day weeks, while others are seriously considering whether they can maintain the full secondary curriculum or if they will have to cut it.

Then there is capital funding for schools. There was no real mention in the Queen's Speech of changes to the schools agenda—including on grammar schools, so we assume that that proposal has bitten the dust. We need nearly £7 billion of capital funding just to bring existing buildings across England up to scratch, yet we have seen a free schools programme that is expected to cost £9.7 billion by 2020. In London alone, four sites have been bought for £30 million or more each, and only recently I heard

of a school in Hertfordshire in an old office block with no sports facilities or playground. The children do their PE in a public car park. Members of all parties have raised with me their concerns about similar examples. We need to invest in our children for this country's long-term future. Our hope for the future, especially with Brexit looming, is that our children will get the best possible education and start in life. Whatever happens, we face choppy waters on immigration with the potential abolition of free movement.

There was also nothing about housing in the Queen's Speech, except the banning of unfair tenant fees. I draw Members' attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests as someone who lets a property. I will personally support that ban, as I hope that my party's Front Benchers will. However, it is an important but small element. The last Government promised to build 1 million homes in the Parliament to 2020, and I wonder whether that is still a target. What we need to see is not the Government talking about "fairness and transparency in the housing market"

and helping to

"ensure more homes are built",

but real numbers and real targets. I look forward to the estimates debates, when we can ensure that we attach money to those words.

Housing is one of the biggest crises in my borough. Education is in crisis at the moment, having been very good, but housing has been a dripping problem for some considerable time. There are problems with home ownership, with prices having risen by 83% since April 2011. Since that year, private sector rents have increased by 27%. In January, the median rent for a three-bedroom property in Hackney was £550 a week, or just shy of £2,500 a calendar month. That is just the median, so many are more expensive. Most people have no hope of getting on the housing ladder in Hackney.

There are also huge issues with social housing. Many households that I see are doubling up, with one family living in the living room and another in the bedroom. That is a real tragedy, because without a stable home, children cannot have a good start in life. If we could sort out housing in Hackney and stop the cuts to education, we would give our children great hope. We have 500 new people applying to be added to the waiting list every month. People do not really move along the waiting list unless they have a serious health problem.

Alan Brown: Does the hon. Lady agree that the crisis in social housing will only get worse, given the right-to-buy situation and the fact that the Government are thousands of homes behind the one-to-one replacement target? Does she agree that there is a case for ending the right to buy for social housing and council stock, as the Scottish Government have done in Scotland?

Meg Hillier: I completely agree with the hon. Gentleman. My borough stands to lose 700 council homes through forced sale. The homes sold in Hackney will be so expensive that they will be hard to buy, but housing association homes sold in other parts of the country must also be replaced. Hackney alone has spent £35 million in the past year to house homeless families in temporary accommodation. Nationally, 120,000 children live in temporary accommodation. That is a national shame.

That is not a good start in life, and it is happening at the same time as we are spending £21 billion per annum on housing benefit. We have got it wrong and we need far more action.

I will not go into detail about the NHS, suffice it to say that the Public Accounts Committee under my chairmanship produced more than 20 reports on that in the last Parliament. The details of our cross-party concerns are on record. It is time that the House and the Government started looking at longer-term solutions to NHS funding. It is no good throwing money at a problem when it arises; we need a longer-term solution.

This Queen's Speech heralds no hope for my constituents. This Government and the preceding one knocked out the rungs of the ladder of opportunity for so many of my constituents. The reach to the first rung is very high. For instance, it is very difficult to get into further education without a loan, or into nursing without the nursing bursary, and we lost the education maintenance allowance six or seven years ago.

Some things will not happen because of the election result—there will be no grammar schools, no badly worked-up proposals on social care, and no scrapping of free school meals for infants—but, after the next election, we need a Government who will look at those who are aspirant and give them the opportunity to succeed. This Government and this Queen's Speech do not do that.

6.22 pm

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): This Parliament has been given a mighty task by the electorate. A year ago, the voters decided that they wanted to take back control of our laws, our borders and our money. They charged us with that duty, and they recommissioned us collectively in the election just held. Eighty-two per cent. of them voted for the two main parties, which both said that they would deliver Brexit as the referendum requested.

I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke). This Parliament has a duty to have its debates, its disagreements and its arguments, but to do things in the right way. It would ill become this Parliament if it precipitated an early party-based crisis and went back to the electors to seek a new mandate. The electors had criticisms of all our parties. They did not give any party the result it wanted. They knew what they were doing, and it is the duty of this Parliament to do some governing, and some criticism of governing, as are our mutual roles. There is nothing to stop us doing that.

On that central issue that dominates the Queen's Speech, it is clear that the British public have resolved again—they resolved in the referendum and in the election. Had they changed their minds since the referendum, they would have voted for the Liberal Democrats, who gave them a very clear option to say in effect: "Change your mind. Here is the way to do it." The Liberal Democrats were very honest about this in the election: they said not only that they wanted a second referendum, but that they would want us to rejoin the European Union. They could not see circumstances in which they would change their mind on that. The electorate said that that was not the way they wished to go.

[John Redwood]

Those who say that the Queen's Speech is thin clearly have not understood it. This is perhaps the most important Queen's Speech I have seen in my time as a Member of Parliament. There is fundamental legislation to give this Parliament back, on behalf of the people, powers over all our lawmaking. Parliament will then be invited to go on to make substantial amendments to how we run agriculture and fishing, how we conduct international trade, and how we carry out many of our arrangements. The purpose of the legislation will be to amend and improve on European schemes that we are currently unable to amend, or able to amend only with the agreement of all 28 member states, which is very unlikely.

I campaigned in the election on a different slogan from the one recommended by Conservative Front Benchers. My slogan was "prosperity not austerity". I did that deliberately, because I believe we have had enough austerity, and I want to see the promotion of higher living standards and better family incomes as our main purpose. I am conscious that schools and social care in my area need more public money support. That is true of many of my hon. Friends in English constituencies. The good news is that the Government are coming to the same conclusion, and I look forward to the public spending statements and Budget statements that will make more money available for our priorities. We will clearly need more money for the health service—the Government have promised substantial new sums—and we will need to commit to substantial sums for our healthcare over the years ahead.

The Brexit issue is relevant. It was not misleading in the Brexit referendum for the leave side to say that there will be money to spend when we cancel our contributions. I look forward to our negotiators making it very clear to our friends in the European Union that we will pay our contributions up to the point when we leave, but that we do not owe them any great bill, and we certainly will not be paying contributions once we have left. That money is then available for this Parliament, on the advice of the Government, to decide how to spend. I would be happy if we began to spend a bit of it even before March 2019 when we come to the end of our contributions, because there is a need now and our borrowing is under very good control. As we have heard, borrowing is down by three quarters since the programme began after the big crash—the programme was initiated by the Labour Government, then continued by the coalition and the Conservative Government. We need to be prudent and sensible—there is no magic money tree, and we cannot spend all the money we would like to spend, or all the money envisaged in the Labour party manifesto—but to relax in those areas where the public services clearly need it. I believe that that is possible, given the Brexit context.

I was conscious in the election that young people were critical of the Conservative party. They were often very attracted to the Labour party's offers. The Labour manifesto offered attractive financial changes for current students and those who have accumulated student debt that they have not yet got rid of. I would like Conservatives to take on board the fact that we need to provide a better offer to students and young people, so that next time we can engage rather better with the younger person vote than we do today.

There is one ambition on which younger people above all would like the Conservatives to do better. We are uniquely well placed to help more of them to become homeowners. It is a worrying social change in our country that many people in the 25-to-40 age range feel that they cannot afford to buy a property. We have good schemes to help with deposits and mortgage affordability, and we have schemes to help with the affordability of homes, but it is not enough and we need to do so much more. We need to redouble our efforts to show that we understand that ambition, and that we wish to empower young people.

In practice, the Government are working hard in a number of important ways to help young people. The phenomenal job-generation powers of the economy since 2010 have been extremely helpful, because the first thing a young person graduating or leaving school needs is a job. The training and qualifications support that we are putting in place is very important, because we do not want them to have any old job. We want them to go into jobs that allow them to grow into more responsible and better qualified roles, which can lead to much better pay.

We in this House are in practice—although we like to pretend that we are not—completely united in wanting people to have good employment and better paid jobs. The issue is how quickly people get there, what Government can do and what people and private institutions have to do for themselves to bring that about. I am pleased that the Government have a number of schemes—on technical qualifications and on student support—but we need to do far more, because we need to show young people that we are on their side when it comes to launching them on a path to better paid and better qualified employment.

Sir Peter Bottomley: Does my right hon. Friend also agree that employment taxation is far too high? If we take the total cost to an employer of employing somebody and see what the employee is left afterwards, the gap is enormous—there is not even a single word to cover it, although some would call it a wedge. The gap is enormous and we ought to bring it down.

John Redwood: I quite agree. I have always believed that lower tax rates are the answer, and I think there are areas where we could lower the tax rates and get in more revenue, which is exactly what we need to do. We need more money for the public services, but we need more incentives, we need people to be able to retain more of what they earn and we need employers to be able to afford the extra employees, so that is very important.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

John Redwood: I am not allowed very long and I wish others to join in the debate.

My last point is that when we look at our massive balance of payments deficit—£70 billion on trade account with the EU last year—we see how much scope there is when we are allowed to run, for example, our own fishing and farming policy, to substitute home production and home supply for imported supply. That will create jobs, reduce food miles and make a much better contribution to our economy, because a big part of the £70 billion trade deficit last year was in food and drink and fishing.

It is almost unbelievable that the country with far and away the richest fishing ground in the whole EU, and which used to be a major exporter of fish before we joined the European Economic Community, is now a net importer of fish and has so few active fishing boats. I am quite sure that this House, on a multi-party basis, can sit down and design a much better fishing policy than the one we have struggled under for 40 years or more in the EEC and the EU, one that will create more jobs, more capacity, more investment and more home fishing. As I put it, we can have a policy that is kinder to the fish and kinder to the fishermen and women, and it is our task to design it.

Of course we are going to have lots of political disagreements, and I am never shy of political argument, as colleagues will know, but we also have a unique opportunity to show that where it matters—on jobs, prosperity, home ownership and promoting better opportunities for our young people—there are huge opportunities in Brexit. Let us, for example, start with a fishing policy and an agricultural policy that are better for Britain and better for all of them.

6.33 pm

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood). I agree with him entirely about the importance of this Queen's Speech and this Parliament. There is an enormous amount that the Queen's Speech portends for this Parliament. The work that has now been given to us is far reaching and so important that it will necessarily dominate much of our time and consideration in the months and years ahead.

I join others who have spoken in paying tribute to the Members who sadly passed away in the past year, Gerald Kaufman and Jo Cox. I remember speaking just over a year ago from the Bench below on behalf of all the Northern Ireland Members of Parliament—nationalist, Unionist and independent—and at their request, and voicing our united and heartfelt horror at that terrible event, repeating what so many people have said today about the need to draw good out of such evil and about the tremendous example shown by Jo Cox's family. Many of those good colleagues from Northern Ireland are no longer with us. They were in other parties, and I have already paid tribute to their contribution in this House. It is now the sad reality that those Members who were elected to represent the nationalist community in Northern Ireland do not take their seats. We disagree fundamentally on many issues, but no matter what their views may be, it is sad for the electorate that they do not take their seats and speak up for their constituents in this House. We are very conscious of that.

I want to welcome the two new Members to our Benches, my hon. Friends the Members for South Antrim (Paul Girvan) and for Belfast South (Emma Little Pengelly). They have joined us after an election that saw the DUP, perhaps uniquely among all the parties in this House, win not only a majority in the area in which it stood, but with the greatest share of the vote ever in its history and with the greatest number of Members of Parliament.

However, the House meets under the shadow of terrible events—lives lost, families destroyed and communities devastated. Our hearts go out to all those who have been bereaved in recent incidents, to the injured and to

all who have suffered and are suffering so terribly. Just before the election, many of us were here in the Chamber on 22 March, the day on which four innocent people were killed on Westminster bridge and PC Keith Palmer was murdered just yards from where we sit. He died to defend freedom and democracy. Little did we think then that terrorism would so soon again inflict such horror across the country. We had the awful Manchester Arena attack on 22 May, followed by the attack on London Bridge and Borough market on 3 June, the horrific fire in Grenfell Tower in the early hours of last Wednesday morning, which has been seared into the consciousness of everyone everywhere, and now another man murdered by the despicable terrorist attack near Finsbury Park mosque.

These are indeed dark times for our nation, yet in the midst of such darkness, terror, pain and death, we have seen the love and sheer humanity of hundreds and thousands of people—family, friends, neighbours and communities coming, together simply to help in any way they can. We have witnessed the bravery and selfless courage of our emergency services, stretched beyond belief but dedicated to rescuing and helping others. What examples of love and compassion we have seen in recent days.

The terrible fire at Grenfell Tower must make us absolutely determined to do what is right by the families affected and to take whatever steps are needed as soon as possible to ensure that such a thing can never happen again and to bring reassurance to people who live in such tower blocks.

The acts of terrorism highlight the threats that we face from a variety of sources, each with their own version of hate-filled ideology. United, we can and will defeat the terrorists, just as in Northern Ireland, united, we have defeated the scourge of terrorism to a large extent. There are of course still challenges there, but we have shown a way forward.

Combating the threats posed to innocent life and to our way of life by terrorism must be at the very top of the new Government's agenda. There is no greater responsibility of Government than the protection of the lives of its citizens and the security and defence of the kingdom. We on the DUP Benches will of course be clear in our support for measures that make people safer and our United Kingdom more secure, and we must always do right by the brave men and women of our security forces, who put their lives on the line to protect and defend us. That is why the commitment to implement the armed forces covenant throughout the United Kingdom, as mentioned in the Gracious Speech today, is so important. We look forward to working with the Government to make that a reality across our land, particularly in Northern Ireland, where there have been problems implementing the armed forces covenant and where there remains a great tradition of service in Her Majesty's forces. We are of course a Unionist party, as is the Conservative and Unionist party, and I believe that the Labour party—the vast bulk of its members and those who vote for it—are patriotic believers in the United Kingdom as well.

I welcome very warmly these words in the Gracious Speech:

“A priority will be to build a more united country, strengthening the social, economic and cultural bonds between England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.”

[Nigel Dodds]

Strengthening the Union—our precious Union, as the Prime Minister has rightly called it—must be the overarching aim of this Government. The case for the Union is a positive one. It is one that finds increasing favour in Northern Ireland, across the community divide, as has been illustrated by recent opinion polls and surveys. We will work with Ministers to advance and deepen the ties that bind our constituent countries and regions together. That approach will be needed as we face the greatest political and constitutional challenge of this Parliament, of which other right hon. and hon. Members have, of course, spoken at great length—Brexit.

The country as a whole has voted for Brexit, and this Parliament must now deliver it. Attempts to undermine or subvert the democratic decision made in the referendum would be catastrophic. We must get on with carrying out the people's wishes. I welcome the priority that has been given by both the United Kingdom Government and European Union negotiators to finding sensible outcomes to the challenges that face Northern Ireland, particularly the issue of the land frontier with the Irish Republic. That shows, I believe, that despite all the rhetoric, people are up for finding sensible and pragmatic solutions.

We have, of course, heard some debate today about membership of the single market and the customs union, and we have heard talk about special status for Northern Ireland within the European Union. Let me make this very clear. I believe that when people voted, in the European Union referendum, to leave the European Union, they voted to leave the single market and the customs union, and I believe that Northern Ireland, along with the rest of the United Kingdom, must do likewise. We must not find ourselves allowing borders to be erected between the island of Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom; that would be totally unacceptable. We must be imaginative, flexible and pragmatic in ensuring that there is an open border, as frictionless as possible, between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. There are ways—sensible ways that have already been discussed—of ensuring that that can be made to happen, and it is in the interests of the Irish Republic and the European Union, as well as those of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, to make it happen.

The great advantage with which we start is that everyone is saying that—apart from, I have to say, Sinn Féin, which is calling for special status within the EU for Northern Ireland. That has not been adopted or accepted by the new Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, by any of the parties in the Irish Republic, or by the EU negotiators. Everyone accepts that Northern Ireland's priorities in relation to the land frontier must also be at the top of the negotiating priorities.

Ian Paisley: I agree wholeheartedly that the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic must be frictionless, but does my right hon. Friend accept that security considerations must not be set aside in that context? Is he alarmed, as I have been, by recent reports from security analysts, who say that there is now a worrying number of radicalised individuals in the Republic of Ireland and that that poses challenges for our border?

Nigel Dodds: That is a very important point. One thing that has been very welcome in recent years is the strong security and working relationship between the

Garda Síochána in the Irish Republic and the Police Service of Northern Ireland. That co-operation is very strong, and it will continue. Indeed, the PSNI chief constable recently made some remarks about how it would continue once we had left the European Union. Again, a pragmatic, sensible solution will be found to allow jurisdictional and other issues to proceed.

In meeting the challenge of Brexit, how much stronger Northern Ireland would be if we were able to get the Northern Ireland Executive up and running as quickly as possible. If we cannot restore the Executive, we will ensure in the House of Commons, working closely with Ministers, that Northern Ireland's voice is heard and our interests are protected. What we want is the return of an inclusive Government with everyone involved in drawing up what should happen, together. That makes sense. That is the positive, sensible way forward. It makes no sense for people to say, "We are not going to take our seats at Westminster; we have brought down the Executive, and we are not going to get it up and running again", and then to complain about what is happening. That is simply not logical.

At a time of unprecedented change and challenge, it is vital for Northern Ireland to have an Assembly and Executive that work properly. We did not collapse the Executive, and we did not walk out of the Assembly. We could have done so last year, when Sinn Féin and the IRA were associated with the murder of a man in the Markets area in Belfast. The Ulster Unionists walked out, but we did not. We stuck in there. We worked together to try to continue to make the devolved institutions work.

We want to make sure that the Assembly is up and running, and we have set no red lines or preconditions. We believe that the challenges of Brexit—the issues of health, education, the delivery of public services and the economy—are far more important than the issues that divide us. They are the people's priorities, and they should be the politicians' priorities as well.

The economic outlook for Northern Ireland would, of course, be much easier to predict if there were stable government in Belfast, and that doubtless applies here as well. The electorate sent politicians a very clear message about austerity, and since the election it has become clear that they must listen to what the people have said. I must say that I was very taken with the election slogan adopted by the right hon. Member for Wokingham: "Prosperity, not austerity", and I was glad to hear from the Chancellor at the weekend that he was not deaf to what had been said. For our part, we will again work with the Government over this Parliament to ensure that we deliver prosperity, that we deliver greater spending on health and education, and that we see an end to the dark tunnel of austerity.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Nigel Dodds: I am about to end my speech, and I know that others want to speak.

We are about strengthening the Union, delivering Brexit, defending our country from threats of terrorism at home and abroad, creating prosperity, and ensuring that Northern Ireland continues to move forward. It is in the furtherance of those objectives that we will act and vote in this Parliament over the next five years.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr George Howarth): Order. I am afraid that, so that as many Members as possible can be accommodated during the rest of today, I shall have to impose a time limit of 10 minutes.

6.47 pm

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): It is a delight to follow the right hon. Member for Belfast North (Nigel Dodds), who made a very thoughtful and sensitive speech. Indeed, he expressed the sentiments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (John Redwood), who said that, overwhelmingly, the country had delivered the parties that had promised to deliver Brexit. Only one party tried to offer some form of second referendum, and believe me, its members spent a lot of time stamping around my constituency. It is no secret that I was a leading Brexit Member of Parliament, and that 63% of my constituents had voted to remain. Even so—despite the onslaught on my constituency—the good people of St Albans returned me to Parliament for the fourth time, and I am very grateful for that.

Other Members have said today that they are not deaf to austerity and the problems that face our schools. I, too, am not deaf to the concerns that were raised in my constituency, and never intended to be. I think it behoves us all, whichever side of the argument we were on, to recognise that, overwhelmingly, the country voted to proceed with its decision to leave the European Union. They will not thank a single one of us who seeks to play political games with that, and they will not thank a single one of us who chooses to try to make a Government fall, fail, look stupid, or become mired in a business that would mean that nothing else happened and nothing got through.

I want to refer to other aspects of the Queen's Speech, but I absolutely agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham that it is probably the most weighty Queen's Speech with which we have ever had to deal. I sincerely hope that we shall scrutinise it closely in all the months that lie ahead. It is a shame that the Liberal Democrats never seem to stay around to listen to or participate in any of the debates. I remember attending, with my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash), a debate about a takeover of the London stock exchange by Deutsche Bourse. My hon. Friend was extremely concerned about the issue, but only five Members of Parliament turned up to scrutinise it. Eventually, it did not happen, but the point is that we all have a duty to ensure, as difficult issues arise, that we do not take a fixed, intransigent view, but try to adopt the flexible and pragmatic approach to which the right hon. Member for Belfast North referred.

I want to touch on some other things in the Queen's Speech, because I know that we will have many nights of debate on Brexit. I am pleased to hear that the Government will work with BRE. People were trapped in Grenfell Tower. We do not know the reasons behind it all yet. People are saying that potentially it was the cladding, or it was to do with the stairwells. All of us have tower blocks in our constituencies that have been retro-fitted, amended or upgraded for insulation purposes, for example. In my constituency, and I am sure in others, there are blocks that are part privately and part publicly owned. It is only when something happens that the flaws are exposed. I have already written to my local authority—I am sure many Members have written to

theirs—to ask it to evaluate the amendments that have been made to buildings of which they have a share or control. I hope that in the coming months guidance will be provided by the Government to local authorities on that matter because all sorts of things have happened to many buildings over the years and it is important that we understand what the impact has been on their safety standards.

I am delighted that the Queen's Speech mentions helping to reduce motor insurance premiums. I and many other Members took part in a debate on that. The issue is affecting our young people, who are finding it impossible to learn to drive and to get their car insured.

Mr Kevan Jones: In the last few years, the big driver of increases in insurance premiums has been the increase in stealth taxes, for which the hon. Lady and her Government voted.

Mrs Main: There was me hoping for unity. I could say that it was also because the European Union decided to have equalisation and it pushed up the premiums for young women. I want to focus on my speech—other Members want to get in—and on the fact that many young people find it impossible to get affordable insurance on their cars without the bank of mum and dad. It is becoming a mobility issue for them. It is denying some of them the ability to get to work, to job opportunities or to university. I am pleased that we will look at that matter. It is long overdue.

I would also like us to look at extremism in universities and people being fearful for their personal safety because of their creed, colour, faith or gender. I am concerned about the rise of BDS—Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions—at universities. I went to a synagogue hustings; I am sure many colleagues did. I am appalled at the rise of anti-Semitism that is going on at our universities. I wish to highlight that as much as the anti-Muslim sentiment that has been expressed. I am pleased that the Charity Commission is looking into the matter. We should look at what is happening at some of our universities to ensure that no student feels that they cannot take up an opportunity at any campus in the UK because they feel they are unwelcome because of their faith. I said to the synagogues in my constituency that I thought the issue was a priority and I hope that we include that in the things we look at.

I know time is short but, on the upgrades to transport, the Government are consulting on their new independent commission on civil aviation noise. We are expanding airports, including Luton, and they are increasingly causing noise problems for residents. Luton airport uses the RNAV system, which is being reviewed. RNAV is concentrating the noise and the impact on a number of people, who now find it intolerable to live under the flight path. There has been a 150% increase in complaints as a result of the rapid expansion of Luton airport. If we are to expand Heathrow and those flights also stack over St Albans, it is vital that we look at the impact of that and at the noise nuisance that is cumulatively affecting residents in my constituency. During the campaign, a lot of people complained about the increased traffic over their homes and the constant irritation. Therefore, I encourage the Government to bring forward the independent commission on civil aviation noise. I know that many other constituencies will have problems if we ask our airports to expand.

[Mrs Main]

I want to touch briefly on trains. It is no secret to anyone in the House who has heard me witter on for years that consent has been granted for a rail freight site in my constituency that I would rather did not happen. The application was made in 2006, yet 11 years later, I cannot get any facts or figures that show that that freight site is deliverable in terms of access to rail. Since then, the Thameslink project has come in and it is being implemented—the biggest Government infrastructure upgrade in supporting passenger services. How can we allow permission to be granted on the basis of Network Rail's blithe assurances that access to the paths can be delivered? It still cannot provide any timetables. It is amazing that we keep being passed from pillar to post. If the country is going to increase the number of rail freight sites, surely it is imperative that it can be shown that there is access to rail, without disruption to passenger services.

At the moment, Thameslink's public performance has gone from 60% to 85%, but that is still below the national average of 91%. Despite having one of the most connected constituencies, and having commuters whose lifeblood and family life depend on getting in and out of the city in an effective manner, they still cannot get on a reliable train service. I make a plea to the Minister: while we are looking at infrastructure upgrades, bring in Network Rail. It has been responsible for 54% of the delays on passenger services, and 42% of the delays on Thameslink. I cannot understand how the opaque Network Rail system, where no one seems to be held accountable for anything, can be so disruptive, so inefficient and so ineffective in getting things to work properly, yet it is still regarded as the expert by successive Governments in terms of rail infrastructure upgrades. Therefore, please can Ministers, at the earliest possible opportunity, look into the Network Rail system? Do not rely on Network Rail's assurances when other infrastructure projects come along. I am talking about the upgrade of HS2 and further access to high-speed rail. In my view, Network Rail cannot in its current state deliver accurate information to Ministers.

The Campaign for Better Transport has said that

“the London Mayor needs to safeguard more rail freight sites in its strategy”.

That is fine, but when freight sites such as the one in my constituency have been granted but no paths on to rail have been agreed, it says to me that we will have a lorry park in the green belt. The potential upgrades in respect of airport, freight and rail expansion need to come with intense scrutiny of what is going on behind the scenes. At the moment, there is not that scrutiny. I know that other colleagues will also say that Network Rail hides behind this opaque system of responsibility. When something goes wrong, the franchise company gets the blame, but often it is Network Rail behind the scenes, with delayed trains and overruns on upgrades and proposed improvements.

I do not want any other constituency blithely to grant planning permissions thinking that these things can be delivered when they cannot. I do not want other residents to have an RNAV focus of noise, and planes coming over their houses making their lives intolerable. Luton airport at the moment does not seem to be able to get its act together with the Heathrow airport expansion and

flight stackings. These things are all interlinked and it is important that we come together as a House and ensure that major infrastructure projects are not developed haphazardly. Each one has to be looked at in terms of the knock-on effect on neighbouring constituencies. Each one has to be looked at in terms of the capacity that is already in place. Without line upgrades, we cannot have the increased movement of freight. Without proper noise monitoring, we cannot ascertain how injurious new flight paths will be.

I will end on that point. There is a lot to consider in the Queen's Speech and I look forward to us doing so.

6.58 pm

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for St Albans (Mrs Main). I congratulate her on her fourth election victory. I am glad, because she will continue the outstanding work that she does for the all-party group on Bangladesh.

Congratulations to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, on your seamless elevation to the Chair. We welcome you to your position. I am honoured again to be returned—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr George Howarth): Order. May I say, for the sake of completeness, that it is a purely temporary phenomenon?

Keith Vaz: I hope I get an extra minute for that.

Sir Peter Bottomley: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Do you or your Clerk know whether an intervention by the occupant of the Chair adds a minute to the time of the Member speaking?

Mr Deputy Speaker: I am lost for words, and that is most certainly not a point of order.

Keith Vaz: Lost for words for the first time, I think, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I am honoured to be returned yet again—for the eighth time—to the House. I am delighted to be joined, representing the city of Leicester, by my hon. Friends the Members for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth) and for Leicester West (Liz Kendall). I stand here today having listened to a number of excellent speeches. Looking back on my three decades in this House, I do not remember a time of such political instability. I hope that the Gracious Speech and the scrutiny that this House will give it will enable us to get at least some legislation through in the next two years.

Terrorism has hit the streets of Britain three times since the House was last in session: in Manchester, at London Bridge and only this week in Finsbury Park. The commitment that has been made by the Prime Minister, and supported by the Opposition, that we put communities at the heart of dealing with counter-terrorism is the right approach. The Prevent strategy, which has been in operation under successive Governments, does need to be reviewed. We clearly need a strategy, but unless we put our communities at the forefront of trying to deal with terrorism, we cannot hope to succeed. It is important, especially at this time, that we choose our words very carefully indeed.

I pay tribute to the chief constable of Leicestershire, Simon Cole, for his work on counter-terrorism. He is the Prevent leader for the police. We in Leicester are a city of many cultures, races and religions. We live in

harmony, apart from a small disorder last Sunday: after Pakistan beat India there was much activity on the Belgrave Road, but I hope very much that that was a one-off. Normally, however, all communities work very well and closely together.

In the context of counter-terrorism, it is important to raise the issue of policing. The threat to policing mentioned by the head of counter-terrorism, Mark Rowley, in his letter to the Home Secretary today is an important point. It is right that the Government have protected the counter-terrorism budget over the past few years but, as we all know, information is gathered at a local level and it is vital that the Government publish the policing funding formula, for which we have been waiting for over a year.

In Leicestershire, we have lost 547 police officers since 2009—that is a reduction of 23%. In 2006, there was one police officer for every 430 people; now we have one for every 599 people. Despite the excellent work of the chief constable and his team, the police and crime commissioner, Willy Bach, and his deputy Kirk Master, they are still awaiting the formula, but without that formula, they simply cannot plan.

I join other Members in recognising the tragedy of the Grenfell flats fire and the fact that that obviously has an implication for all our constituencies in which we have high-rise accommodation. The Government must act quickly to deal with these issues so that people can be reassured that something is being done to protect them. I join the Leader of the Opposition and others in commending my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Emma Dent Coad) on the work that she has done.

Brexit will, of course, dominate proceedings over the next two years. I hope that, as a matter of urgency, we will clarify the position of EU citizens. Some 3 million EU citizens live in the United Kingdom. My constituency has 10,000 people who have come from the EU—the majority hold Portuguese passports—and they are very anxious about whether they will be allowed to remain in the United Kingdom. Of course the Government have said they want them to stay, but unless we get that in writing, it will not satisfy them.

There are practical difficulties, too. I am glad to see the former Immigration Minister, the hon. Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Mr Goodwill), on the Front Bench, because this was raised by the Home Affairs Committee in the last Parliament. Some EU citizens have arrived with identity cards but without passports, while others have passports. When they make their applications for indefinite leave, it will be important that the practicalities are taken into consideration. We in this place have suggested that the registration should perhaps be done at a local level through local authorities, rather than through a process of writing to the Home Office because, as we know, it takes a great deal of time for it to reply.

Meg Hillier *rose*—

Keith Vaz: I give way to the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee.

Meg Hillier: I am not actually Chair of the PAC, but I thank my right hon. Friend for giving way.

This issue of registration is very important to many of my constituents. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is time that the Government came up with more detail on this, and looked at how the process can be fast-tracked so that people do not have to go through multi-page documents for every time they have left the country? People who have been here for a long time and have proof of that should be able just to be fast-tracked.

Keith Vaz: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about what happens when people have to try to fill in those forms and then submit them to the Home Office, where there is a backlog of 400,000 cases, as those of us who do immigration work will know. They simply do not get a reply, so simplifying the application process, and perhaps moving it to a local level, would be the way to move forward.

There is no health Bill in the Gracious Speech. I know of your interest in diabetes, Mr Deputy Speaker, and your regular attendance at the all-party group on diabetes, which I chaired in the last Parliament. I declare an interest as someone who has type 2 diabetes. My right hon. Friend the Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott), whose 30th anniversary celebration I will be attending tonight, recently found out that she has type 2 diabetes. What I would like to see, and what I think the House would like to see—this is certainly what the group has talked about many times—is a recognition of the need for individuals to be tested so that they know whether they have diabetes. More than that, once people are tested for diabetes, they need to be given compulsory education. There must be structured education for those with diabetes with regard to diet and lifestyle. Far too often, all the GPs do is prescribe tablets for individuals with type 2 diabetes, or inject type 1 diabetics with insulin. It is very important that we pass some legislation on structured education.

As we know, 3.5 million people—6% of the population—have been diagnosed with diabetes in the United Kingdom, and that figure is likely to rise to 5 million by 2025, representing almost 10% of the population. As we also know, treatment accounts for 10% of the national health service budget, so prevention is extremely important, and I am disappointed that we do not have a Bill on this subject.

I know it is not fashionable to do so, but I want to thank George Osborne, who has left this House, for his sugar tax, which he introduced before he left and I hope is still on track. Of course, Mr Osborne has not gone to the other place, as others have done; he has gone to a higher place—the editorship of the *Evening Standard*—but his legacy on the sugar tax is something that we all celebrate.

I have two final points, the first of which is on Yemen. There are others in this House who have been here for longer than me—the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) came into the House with me 30 years ago—but I cannot remember a Queen's Speech debate in which the Prime Minister did not refer to foreign policy. I know that the Prime Minister talked about Brexit, but we heard no mention of foreign policy. I would have liked to have heard something about Yemen. Yemen is of course a country that is very close to my heart—I was born there and I chair the all-party group on Yemen. Ten thousand people have

[Keith Vaz]

been killed in the civil war in Yemen so far, 3.2 million people have been internally displaced, and 14.1 million people—half the population—have none of their basic healthcare needs met.

I pay tribute to Flick Drummond for the work that she did in this House, to Angus Robertson for the number of times he led on Yemen during Prime Minister's questions, and to Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh for what she did when she was in this House. All of them made a huge contribution. I also thank the right hon. Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood) for his outstanding work as Minister. He always engaged with the all-party group and we will miss him. We know that he has been replaced by the right hon. Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt), but he was an outstanding Minister as far as Yemen was concerned.

My final point concerns one of my youngest constituents, who died during the election campaign. All of us will have read about the case of Evha Jannath, the 11-year-old girl who died at Drayton Manor park on 9 May 2017. The inquest is pending, and Staffordshire police and the Health and Safety Executive are conducting inquiries. I thank both organisations for the work they have done, but serious questions remain about the rides that young people take at theme parks such as Drayton Manor. We will need a full inquiry into what happened so that we can understand how it happened and prevent such a thing from happening to young children in the future.

This will be a rollercoaster two years. I know that our attention will be not only on Westminster but on Belfast, because of the role that the Democratic Unionist party will play. I think that its Members have already returned to Belfast to begin their work. I hope that we can be constructive, that we can create lasting legislation and that we do not just spend all our time talking about Brexit. There is important work to be done, and I know that Members—especially the newer ones—all want to participate in it.

7.10 pm

Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz), who always speaks a good deal of sense on these occasions. I draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests, and I should like to thank my constituents for so generously returning me to represent them in this place for a fifth time.

This is clearly going to be an unusual Parliament, as the Gracious Speech demonstrates. In a hung Parliament, political power tends to pass from the Cabinet Room to the Floor of this House, and I hope that there are issues on which we can work together across the House. I hope that we can lift our eyes from the obvious party political domestic preoccupations. We did so over Syria in the last Parliament, when I had the great good fortune to work closely with Jo Cox. We were co-chairs of the all-party parliamentary group on Syria. Syria remains the defining catastrophe of our age, with 11 million Syrians—half the population—displaced from their homes. I am glad that the Gracious Speech supports an intensification of Britain's efforts in the middle east. There is international consensus on the need to defeat and destroy ISIL, and this should be prosecuted with

much greater vigour. However, defeating ISIL militarily is just a small part of our task. The much greater part is to defeat a nihilist death cult that has attracted young people to its cause.

We need to address Britain's role in the world after Brexit. Britain stands for certain values—not so much British values as international values. We are the fourth largest military power, and one of the very few countries that can undertake expeditionary military activity. We have one of only three diplomatic services that span the world, and it is deeply respected, not least at the United Nations. Our international development work is saving millions of lives and transforms the way in which millions of the world's poorest live. This British leadership is respected throughout the world, if not in certain quarters of the British press. I urge Ministers to stand up for the brilliant work being done by Britain, and not to cower under the table in the face of the onslaught of the *Daily Mail*. Of course Britain does not give bilateral money to North Korea, but as part of the United Nations we do try to stop North Korean children starving to death.

There is some concern in the development community about the apparent double-hatting of Foreign Office Ministers to cover the Department for International Development. If I may use a swashbuckling analogy that might appeal to the Foreign Secretary, there is some fear that his eye has alighted on a plump galleon loaded with bullion and that he wishes to board that galleon and plunder her cargo. The rules governing the spending of British aid are clearly laid down by the OECD development assistance committee. I think that those rules can be improved, but I do not believe that this House would agree to their being unilaterally abandoned by the United Kingdom.

Similarly, the Government have a duty to address the terrorist acts that horrified us all during the election. The whole House will also condemn the dreadful anti-Muslim hate crime that surged after the appalling atrocities in Manchester and London. Getting the balance right between collective security and individual liberty will not be easy, but many of us in the House are wary of tampering with ancient liberties and of giving additional power to the state unless it is absolutely necessary. If the terrorists alter our way of life, they win.

I am glad that the ill-advised idea of leaving the ECHR has been dropped. It would never have got through the House anyway. It might be possible to improve the Human Rights Act 1998, but we should not seek to repeal it just because it was drafted by Tony Blair. That brings me to the central issue in British politics today: our departure from the EU. I sometimes think that, when it comes to Europe, my party is the victim of a biblical curse. I hear the arguments eloquently put, by friends and colleagues I greatly respect, in favour of both a soft and a hard Brexit, but what virtually all my constituents want is the best possible deal. They care deeply not only about their living standards and quality of life but about those of their children and grandchildren. They want the best possible deal for Britain.

Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con): Would my right hon. Friend like to reflect on the utility of the terms “soft Brexit” and “hard Brexit”? I do not consider them to be of very much use in this discussion. They serve to confuse rather than to enlighten.

Mr Mitchell: My hon. Friend has got that absolutely right. Indeed, that is very much the point I am trying to make. My suggestion to my right hon. and hon. Friends is that we let our negotiator get on with this task without undue noises off. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union clearly has the skills and experience to deliver the best deal. I am sure that we should try to work across the political parties on this and perhaps also widen the scope for business to contribute its expertise more broadly as part of the negotiations, but let us let my right hon. Friend get on with it. I want to warn my right hon. Friends that we as a party own this process. If it goes wrong and is seen to be an economic cost to Britain, the eyes of the electorate will narrow, regardless of how our constituents voted in the referendum, and the revenge that will be wrought on our party at the subsequent polls will be hideous to behold.

Finally, I want to make a party political point. I suspect that I was not alone in being deeply dismayed, during the election campaign, by the almost total failure to contest Labour's assertion that austerity was somehow a voluntary measure and the infliction by the Conservative Government of some sort of Tory vice. It is a myth that we can abandon austerity and indefinitely run a significant annual deficit and ballooning debt. We have been able to maintain the deficit only because the markets have trusted Conservative Ministers to deliver fiscal discipline. In Britain today, we have a serious intergenerational problem. Far from helping young people, failure to address the deficit would be a betrayal of the young because they will have to pay in due course for the overspending of their parents' generation. As it happens, I do not think I know any young people who voted Conservative at this election, although my own two daughters assured me that they would have done so, had they voted in Sutton Coldfield.

This message of fiscal discipline—fiscal reality, as it seems to me—needs to be explained and amplified once again. Our generation cannot go on spending money we do not have and have not earned. We can resile from hard spending decisions but it is our children and grandchildren who will pay. We need to explain once again how sky-high tax levels bring in less revenue and how raising corporation tax costs jobs, deters business and drives investment away. We heard precious little about the economy during the election, yet unemployment in Britain is lower today than at any time since I was at school. We need to engage with and revisit these vital arguments.

There are other issues on which we can work together across the parties. The issue of how we fund and organise the NHS and social care is urgently in need of a full-scale review. My personal view is that the extent of the problems in the NHS has been marked by the extremely skilful handling of this matter by the Health Secretary. However, we simply cannot go on with this sticking plaster approach. This nettle must be grasped, and if the concept had not been so discredited by the television programme "Yes, Minister", I would have thought that some sort of royal commission structure would be appropriate. Some mechanism for inclusive national debate about the way forward must be found. We cannot continue to coax a quart out of a pint pot. Staff morale has been stretched to its limits. We all know that that is true and we must therefore do something about it. I am particularly pleased to see the announcement of a consultation on mental health services in the Gracious Speech.

Alex Chalk: Has my right hon. Friend had the experience I have had in my constituency of speaking to doctors and other medical professionals and hearing that they are crying out for a cross-party approach that will take the political heat out of these matters, which affect their lives and their patients' lives? They want to see the politics taken out of something that is so very important for our society.

Mr Mitchell: My hon. Friend is making, with great eloquence, the point I am trying to make: we need to have a national debate. We cannot continue with this sticking plaster approach on all these matters.

Let me conclude my remarks, so that others can get in, by ending on a consensual note. It would be churlish of this House not to recognise the effective election campaign waged by the Leader of the Opposition, with whom I have had many dealings during our long period together in this House. The whole House will want to pay a special tribute to him in this respect: we salute his extraordinary qualities of mercy and forgiveness as those in his party who have bad-mouthed him in public and in private over the two years since he became leader now flock back to his standard and slink back into his shadow Administration.

This is a good Queen's Speech and I look forward to supporting it in the Lobby.

7.20 pm

Joan Ryan (Enfield North) (Lab): It is my pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell)—I think.

It is an honour to have been re-elected as the Member of Parliament for Enfield North, and I am most grateful to everyone who has placed their trust in me. I am looking forward to continuing my work with constituents on the issues that are important to them, the first and foremost of which is the state of our public services in Enfield and the effects of the huge cuts to our police, health services and schools we have seen under a Conservative Government.

For all of us, feeling safe in our homes, on our streets and in our neighbourhoods is one of the most important things in life. The terrorist incidents we have witnessed in recent months in London and Manchester have highlighted how fragile that sense of safety can be. My thoughts and prayers are with all those who have been injured, or who have lost friends and loved ones in these awful events. I pay tribute to the incredible bravery shown by all of our emergency services. The whole of our community in Enfield has felt these events deeply, just as we have been deeply concerned by the rise in violent crime, particularly knife crime, after the recent spate of 12 stabbings in our borough, which has resulted in three murders since 1 April. All of us owe a great debt of gratitude to the police officers who have responded so speedily and professionally to these incidents. Sadly, however, these tragic events have become increasingly, and shockingly, common in our community, and this was an ever-present issue on the doorstep. Over the past seven years, under a Conservative Government, violent crime in Enfield has rocketed by some 70%. We have a duty to minimise this risk to ordinary law-abiding citizens, which is why we need police patrolling our streets.

Meg Hillier: Does my right hon. Friend agree that giving our young people the right to roam on the streets in which they live is such an important issue, that they should not live in fear and that their voices need to be heard in this debate as well?

Joan Ryan: I agree absolutely, which is why we need police in our community, building community relationships. For those, mostly teenagers and young men, who are stabbing each other—or being stabbed—we have a duty to protect them from themselves. We have failed somewhere along the line. The Government cannot wash their hands of responsibility for any increase in crime, given that they have made such swingeing cuts to our safer neighbourhoods teams. It is no coincidence that the 70% rise in violent crime in Enfield has come at exactly the same time as 188 police officers and police community support officers have been removed from our streets. Nor is it a coincidence that violent crime has increased so sharply at exactly the same time as it became harder for our police to carry out “stop and search” of youths suspected of carrying knives. Since 2012, stop and search in London has fallen by 70%, and last year we saw a 24% rise in the number of knife crime offences across the capital. Parents from all sections of the community in Enfield are crying out for a new, workable, responsible stop and search policy, because teenagers are being stabbed to death every few weeks. I know there was a problem with stop and search, but I think that could be sorted. Despite the best efforts of our police service in Enfield, it is nigh on impossible for them to maintain a highly visible police presence on our streets when we now have only about 550 police officers attempting to protect a population of 330,000 people.

Meg Hillier: One area of police funding that we on the Public Accounts Committee examined as long ago as 2015 was the impact on police services of cuts in other public services, whereby the police became the responder of first and last resort, for example, on mental health. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is an additional pressure, which is clearly causing pressures in her borough, too?

Joan Ryan: Absolutely. Various studies show that upwards of 70% of police call-outs involve some kind of mental health issue, which many police do not feel able to deal with. Enfield is a growing borough. It is London’s fifth largest borough and over the next decade is set to become the fourth biggest, so spreading resources this thinly is unfair, both to the public and to the police. There has been no way of getting the Prime Minister, either now or when she was Home Secretary, to face up to the effect of her law and order policies on people’s lives. When the current Home Secretary came to Enfield North during the election campaign, after a young man was stabbed to death, she said nothing about the loss of almost 200 uniformed police officers and PCSOs locally, and 20,000 police officers nationally, over the past seven years. I notice nothing in the Gracious Speech that indicates any plan to increase police numbers. The Home Secretary called for longer prison sentences for carrying a knife, which many people would support, but that is completely ineffective if we have not got the police on the streets in the first place. If we cannot catch them, we cannot sentence them.

The policy response has to be about prevention, education and more visible policing. Working with the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, I am pleased that Enfield will have 21 more local, ward-based officers in place by the end of this year to help fight crime. Unfortunately, the Government are taking entirely the opposite approach. The Met has already seen £600 million stripped from its central Government grant since 2010; another £400 million cut is planned by 2020; and as much as £700 million on top of that could be cut due to changes in the police funding formula—we have yet to hear the details. At a time when the Met Commissioner is saying that the police are “very stretched”, cuts on this scale would spell disaster. They will put the safety of our communities at risk. I urge the Government to provide the Mayor of London and the Met police with the resources they need to ensure proper levels of policing in Enfield and throughout the capital.

Let me turn to the issue of local health services in Enfield. I recall standing in this place in 2015 for that year’s Gracious Speech, when I spoke about the “shocking decline in acute care and primary care provision”—[*Official Report*, 2 June 2015; Vol. 596, c. 504.]

under this Government. Chase Farm hospital has lost its accident and emergency and maternity unit, and seen its in-patient beds reduced in number from 500 to 48. The closure of those facilities heaped huge pressure on local GP practices and the A&E department at the North Middlesex hospital. Last year, the North Mid was tipped into crisis, partly as a result of those pressures, and the A&E department was saved from partial closure only by a public outcry, the launch of a community campaign and the concerted lobbying of health Ministers by myself and other north London MPs. However, just yesterday we learned of a leaked NHS report which, according to the Royal College of Surgeons, threatens “devastating” cuts to local health services in north London. Those would impact on the quality of care provided to patients and, potentially, close further A&E and maternity units, affecting residents throughout Enfield, Camden, Islington, Haringey and Barnet. During the general election, I pledged to do all I can to protect our NHS from these cuts—I reaffirm that pledge today—and to work with residents and fellow MPs in Enfield and across North London to oppose these proposed cuts with all means at our disposal.

I had hoped to move on to a positive note on education, but, sadly, that cannot be the case. The third aspect of public services that came up so frequently on the doorstep during the election campaign was concern about the future of our children’s education. A good education is essential for unlocking young people’s potential and is a vital investment in our country’s future, at a time when we need to build the best skilled workforce possible. I am therefore dismayed, as are so many parents, headteachers, teachers and others in Enfield, that our primary and secondary schools are facing the largest real-terms cuts to their budgets in a generation.

Before the election, Enfield faced the prospect of a further £27 million cut to school funding by 2020 under a Conservative Government. The Conservative party’s panicked manifesto commitments on education, which have served only to make the scale of the impending cuts less transparent, will result in all schools in Enfield losing out in real terms. Schools are having to consider further reductions to their staffing levels, support services

and curriculums, which could seriously compromise standards and affect every child's ability to achieve their very best. However long this Parliament may last, I will be fighting for our children's education and for a fair funding deal for Enfield's schools.

To turn away from domestic issues for a moment, the top of the last page of the Gracious Speech states:

"My Government will work to find sustainable political solutions to conflicts across the Middle East."

It is no secret in the House that I have a long-standing commitment to a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine. I remind the Government, and particularly the Department for International Development, of the value of building peace at the grassroots by supporting co-existence projects that bring Israelis and Palestinians together—projects that build a constituency for peace and of which there are many good examples. There is undoubtedly an international consensus in support of a renewed focus on the importance of the civil society dimension to advancing a two-state solution.

I agree almost without exception with the remarks of the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) on Brexit. Interestingly, the subject came up very little on the doorstep during the election campaign, but it is an underlying concern and anxiety for our constituents. As strapped for cash as public services are now, if the Government come back with no deal, a bad deal, or the worst possible deal, we could see our public services absolutely collapse through lack of funding. People in Enfield, and up and down the country, are aware that Brexit is a significant threat to their standard of living and to public services. We all have to try to work constructively, as far as we possibly can, to get the best deal, but the onus is on the Government to ensure that Opposition Members are able to work with them. If not, I fear for the outcome for my constituents. I seek reassurances from Ministers that my constituents will be given the resources they need so that they have the decent public services that mean so much to their way of life, safety, health, education and future.

7.33 pm

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): I support the Gracious Speech, except the proposal for a Bill on HS2, which I shall oppose, as I have done so far. I will support my constituents relentlessly on that matter.

I turn to Brexit. [*Laughter.*] What a surprise! Leaving the European Union is a given, even for my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke). It follows that we will leave the single market and the customs union, as stated in the article 50 notification letter and in our manifesto. I disagree with my right hon. and learned Friend on the question of the single market and the customs union. The European Union Referendum Act 2015 was passed by a massive majority. In the referendum itself, there was a clear majority for leave. The European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act 2017 passed in this House by 498 to 114 Members. At the general election, 85% of all constituencies voted for Members of Parliament to deliver the referendum result. We will soon debate the repeal Bill—I think it is somewhat based on a Bill I put forward a few months ago—which is the consequence of our leaving the treaties, as laid down in the 2017 Act. We will not now be governed by other member states, or by any cohort dominated by one in particular: Germany, which we

increasingly find is the EU in all but name. We will regain our sovereignty, law-making powers, borders and money, and we will run our own affairs, as we did for century after century before 1972.

The economic, political and constitutional nature of our leaving provides us with a historic economic and political opportunity. As the Chancellor rightly said in his Mansion House speech—as well as on "The Andrew Marr Show" last week—during the general election campaign insufficient attention was paid to our success on the economy. Despite the commentariat's recent reports on his speech stating that there would necessarily be a loss of sovereignty, I can find no explicit reference to that in his speech. He was completely right to emphasise the great economic progress we have made since 2009: we grew faster than any other major advanced economy bar Germany; business has created 3.4 million more private sector jobs; and the deficit is down by three quarters. At the same time, we have lowered income tax for 31 million people and taken 4 million people out of income tax altogether.

I do not think the Chancellor mentioned our foreign direct investment, which soared to £197 billion in 2016—up from £33 billion in 2015, according to the OECD. That is an incredible record, and we are now the primary foreign direct investment destination in Europe on the back of our successful economic policies. At 4.5%, unemployment is at its lowest since 1975. Compare that with unemployment in other member states and, in the context of those who voted Labour in the general election, with the massive 40% youth unemployment in so many other member states.

George Freeman (Mid Norfolk) (Con): My hon. Friend referred to our stunning economic success in Europe. How much of that inward investment does he think can be attributed to the fact that we are a gateway to the European market?

Sir William Cash: That is a terrific question to which I shall return emphatically in a few minutes. The basis of my hon. Friend's argument is completely wrong, as I shall explain in a moment.

The reckless spending alternative—the false alchemy of the Labour manifesto—would, in contrast with the Government's economic success, simply bankrupt us and wipe out our success, as the Institute for Fiscal Studies made clear the other day. The Chancellor was right to say that stronger growth is the means by which reasonable taxation can be raised to deliver better public services and better living standards. We need sound money to go with that growth.

The Chancellor mentioned the European Investment Bank, in which we have a massive 16% shareholding, worth more than €10.2 billion. He and others should bear in mind very carefully indeed the fact that the EIB was set up under articles 307 and 308 of the European Union treaty, along with article 28 of protocol 5 on the statute of the EIB. That demonstrates that, as far as I can judge, the EIB is within the jurisdiction of the European Court. I am convinced that that is the case. We should find an answer to the question without surrendering our commitment to insisting on our own Westminster jurisdiction and not that of the European Court. We are going to have to think through this matter very carefully.

[Sir William Cash]

The Chancellor discussed the importance of free trade and how the Prime Minister's Lancaster House speech made clear we would seek a comprehensive free trade agreement. He also confirmed—I repeat: confirmed—that we were leaving the customs union, for which there is a good and fundamental reason. I shall now address the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Norfolk (George Freeman). When we leave the EU, our independent trade policy will be made by our Government, elected at Westminster, not by the unelected European Commission and by majority vote, which, as with all decisions taken under the European Communities Act 1972—as the European Scrutiny Committee made clear in its report in May last year—is made by consensus behind closed doors, with nobody knowing how the decision is arrived at. There is no public record, as we have in Westminster. It is all far removed from the democratic, transparent accountability of our procedures, our *Hansard* and our parliamentary system, in which people know who is deciding what. Furthermore, most EU business is done through the aegis of covert decision making in unsmoke-filled rooms. The EU is intrinsically undemocratic, as the recent Malta declaration of the 27 clearly indicated. I note that the Chancellor stated that as regards our trading policy he believes that we must negotiate

“mutually beneficial transitional arrangements to avoid unnecessary disruption and dangerous cliff edges.”

This mirrors, I think, what has been said by the CBI, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, the manufacturers' group EEF and a number of other trade bodies, some apparently and some actually seeking to keep us in the single market and the customs union for up to five years, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe indicated and with which I disagree.

The Chancellor also emphasised that we need an implementation period and frictionless customs arrangements, albeit, he said, outside the customs union. That poses a serious problem. Against this background, we need to understand where we are with the customs union and the single market and why it is important we leave both on leaving the EU, on which the Labour party is completely confused.

I want to draw attention to our trading within the single market, and ask our friends who are still at heart remainers to please take note of what I am saying. The Office for National Statistics and the House of Commons Library tell us that last year we ran a trade deficit with the 27 member states of £71.8 billion, up £9 billion in that year alone. In the same year, Germany ran a trade surplus with EU countries of £98.9 billion, up £16 billion in that year. Yet we enjoy a trade surplus with the rest of the world of £34.4 billion, which is accelerating rapidly. Yes, 44% of our trade is with the EU, and our trade with it will continue if we leave the single market and the customs union, but our global trade is where our successful economic future lies as soon as we leave the European Union and we have to get real about that.

Furthermore, although many describe leaving the customs union as a cliff edge, if done wisely it will be a launch pad for new and greater opportunities for growth and prosperity, providing trade deals with other countries, improving our regulatory environment, achieving a free

trade agreement with the EU with zero-for-zero tariff deals, dealing with rules of origin, mutual recognition of goods, including agricultural products, and allowing expedited customs arrangements based on new technologies.

Sir Peter Bottomley: My hon. Friend might find it easier to speak less fast once this intervention has given him a few more seconds.

Sir William Cash: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend; I am determined to get through what I have here.

In the context of the City and financial services, there is so much for us to learn from the experience of the European Free Trade Association and its jurisdictional relationships with the European Court of Justice. These provide guidelines and lessons to be learned in achieving mutual respect while retaining our sovereignty and unshackling ourselves from the European Commission's exclusive jurisdiction over external trade policy, which does not work for us even though it does specifically for Germany.

We are fortunate to have Mr Crawford Falconer as our chief trade negotiation adviser and a strong team to deliver a first-class trade policy with major countries such as the USA, Canada and Australia. A few days ago, the Secretary of State for International Trade had an extremely good meeting with the US Commerce Secretary, Wilbur Ross. We have had similar reactions from the other countries I have mentioned. These provide the launch pad for us to enable the growth that will accelerate us towards a global prosperity zone for the United Kingdom. This is a massive new opportunity for the United Kingdom to resume its 300-year-old role in international trade in goods and services, in which we have always delivered throughout our commercial history.

To give some flavour of that, the House of Commons Library tells us that in the last year alone we had a trade surplus of £39.6 billion with the USA, of £1.3 billion with Canada, and in 2015, the most recent year for which data are available, a trade surplus of £3.7 billion with Australia. They have already said that they want to trade bilaterally with us, and we would be crazy not to do it. Out of the customs union, we will build on this—inside it we cannot—and our economic growth and prosperity will expand exponentially, and there will be the means of providing security and stability, and, with that, the provision of good and effective public services mentioned by the right hon. Member for Enfield North (Joan Ryan).

I believe that leaving the EU while achieving acceptable jurisdictional answers to our financial services and other regulatory arrangements, which are currently with the EU, is eminently achievable. An overly narrow view of the potential jurisdictional difficulties is wrongly pessimistic, particularly as regards our potential trading relationships with the rest of the world and our recognition that the single market does not deliver for us.

I was glad that the Chancellor did not refer to the words “soft” and “hard” Brexit in his speech. The words “soft” and “hard” Brexit, so favoured by the BBC and others in the media, are an exercise in casuistry, a weapon of propaganda intended to create a fog when we need above all else clear lines and meanings. This applies

equally to the expression “transitional arrangements”. Where do we draw the lines? What does it mean? Under what jurisdiction?

Leaving the EU is in the national interest and it is our duty, which we are obliged to deliver. I refer now simply to the exchange between Humpty Dumpty and Alice in “Through the Looking Glass”:

“‘When I use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.’ ‘The question is,’ said Alice, ‘whether you can make words mean so many different things.’ ‘The question is,’ said Humpty Dumpty, ‘which is to be master—that’s all.’”

No longer will our master be the European Union and its political puppet masters. They sought to absorb us into a political union, now on the cards as Angela Merkel has demonstrated this week as regards the new financial arrangements—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir David Amess): Order. In order to accommodate the 16 Members who have notified me that they wish to speak, the time limit has now dropped to nine minutes.

7.45 pm

Heidi Alexander (Lewisham East) (Lab): It is probably fitting that I am following the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) as I have promised myself that in this Parliament I will become for remain what he has been for leave during his parliamentary career.

This is the first Queen’s Speech debate in which I have participated since 2010, the year I was elected. If I am honest, I have tended to find the speech itself and the political debate that follows somewhat formulaic. Now we cannot say that that is the case. Events in the past year have hit the British people with a speed and ferocity that is unprecedented in my lifetime: the murder of our beautiful colleague Jo Cox; the referendum; the terrorist attacks in Westminster, Manchester, London Bridge and Finsbury Park; and, of course, the horrific fire at Grenfell Tower just two weeks ago. When our country is in such an awful mess, this Queen’s Speech is exposed as dreadfully wanting. It is dominated by last year’s obsession, Brexit, and this reality is made all the worse by the Government’s commitment to the most complicated and disruptive type of Brexit imaginable. The questions raised with me by my constituents about jobs, policing, schools, hospitals, homes and elderly care barely feature.

The truth is, however, that it is not just the Queen’s Speech that is failing people, but our politics more generally. Take the general election that we have just had. The public witnessed an election being called because of the fallout from last year’s referendum, but they got a campaign that left them none the wiser about how Brexit would be dealt with. They saw a Prime Minister who ran away from the TV cameras and who, when she did appear, was shaky, nervous and wooden. They saw Conservative politicians who could not answer questions about police cuts and counter-terrorism when a suicide bomber had murdered young families at a pop concert. They saw a party that could provide no guarantees about the pound in their pocket or the funding of their public services, and they feared for the homes of elderly parents. It is no wonder that a lot of people in many different parts of the country voted for change.

The past two weeks have cemented public perceptions of a Government floundering, out of their depth and out of step with the reality of life in Britain in 2017.

There is no answer as to why it has taken four years to implement recommendations on fire safety in high-rise blocks. There is no ability to quickly rehouse people whose homes have burned down because of London’s appalling and acute housing crisis, and there is no prospect of quick answers about responsibility for that horrific fire because such a long supply chain was involved. The opportunity to squeeze profit and evade accountability may yet prove dangerously significant.

Joan Ryan: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is an abrogation of the Government’s responsibility if they do not give the assurances sought earlier today about proper resourcing and funding to enable local authorities to carry out safety checks and make changes that will ensure that residents know and feel that they are safe in their tower blocks or their low-rise accommodation?

Heidi Alexander: I agree with my right hon. Friend. The fact that some people will not sleep easily in their beds tonight is proof that the Government have failed.

Alex Chalk: I commend the hon. Lady on rightly pointing out the enormity of the tragedy, but does she agree that it does no service to the victims or their families to seek to politicise this before we even know the cause of this dreadful fire? We have to take the process in stages: find out the cause and then take the necessary action. To politicise this in advance serves no one and does not serve justice.

Heidi Alexander: I do not believe that I am politicising this. I am expressing the views of a significant number of my constituents and people who live in London.

On the day on which the election was called, I was stopped by a constituent at Lewisham station. He simply said to me, “We have to stop the damage Theresa May is doing to our country.” I put that statement on every one of my election leaflets. His concern was about Brexit, about his job in central London, and about his ability in the future to pay for his home and look after his kids. The repeal Bill that was formally announced in the Queen’s Speech will not make him feel better, although it is lauded by some as a positive thing. It will incorporate EU law into our domestic law so that we can decide at a later date which bits we keep and which we do not. That is okay as far as it goes, but there could be a massive sting in the tail.

The process might, for example, include repealing the European Economic Area Act 1993, which underpins our place in the single market. I see no circumstances in which I could vote for us to leave the single market. The Prime Minister might want us to think that the EU and the single market are the same thing, but they are not—the lie has to be nailed. I want to stay in the EU, but if Parliament is engaged in a damage limitation exercise, we must stay in the single market and in the customs union. I am not prepared to risk the queue of lorries at Dover and the queue of people outside Lewisham job centre that is associated with the alternatives.

The UK should be a country in which businesses want to invest, not a country that businesses want to leave. We need to maintain the ease with which British businesses trade with their European counterparts and sell to European consumers. We have seen the list of companies setting up operations overseas and considering

[Heidi Alexander]

their next move. In London, firms such as Deutsche Bank, Goldman Sachs and Lloyds of London are moving jobs to France and Germany. Yes, those are City firms, but we should also think of all the other jobs linked to our capital's status as one of the world's financial centres: in retail, hospitality and events management; and those of the couriers, cleaners and caterers who are up at the crack of dawn and sit on buses running through my constituency to keep this incredible city running.

Services account for nearly 80% of our economy. The single market is essential if we are to continue to trade freely and easily. If we do not put the economy first in Brexit talks, we will crucify our public finances, and we can then kiss goodbye to the extra investment needed in our schools, hospitals and elderly care. These are political choices. Do we prioritise the economy or controls on immigration in the Brexit negotiations? I choose the economy. We will have an immigration Bill at some point in the next two years, but we have no idea what will be in it. We have a two-year Session because the Government cannot draft an immigration Bill, a customs Bill or a trade Bill until negotiations have advanced and they know what to put in them.

In the meantime we tread water. As a country, we control immigration from countries that represent 90% of the world's population. We have the more relaxed system of freedom of movement for the 10% who live in the countries closest to us, which by and large enjoy a standard of living that is either comparable to or approaching our own, but even within that more relaxed system, we could have had—and could still have—greater controls within the overall framework: the need to have a job, for example, or to be self-sustaining after three months of being here. We have the laxest approach to freedom of movement. We have chosen not to place conditions on people coming here, but then blamed the EU for our own failure to enforce conditions that could be part of the system.

We now have a revolt against that and all that it entails. The truth is that we already see people not wanting to come here. They do not feel welcome and the value of their earnings has dropped because of the devalued pound. Our hospital wards, care homes, building sites, farms and restaurants will be left scrabbling around for staff while the Government work out what on earth to do. We need immigration in this country. In 1949, the year my mother was born, more than 730,000 babies were born. Average life expectancy stood at 68. Fast forward to 1975, the year of my birth, and the number of babies born was down to just over 600,000. Nearly 30% of births today are to non-UK-born mothers and average life expectancy stands at 81. Our workforce of tomorrow—the people who will start businesses, work in public services and pay taxes—is partly dependent on immigration. We should be honest about that.

When we talk in Parliament about the causes of and solutions to our housing shortage, and about the pressures on our national health service, we should spend as much time focusing on our ageing population as we do on immigration. It is not a queue of migrants that I see at the doors of A&E; it is a queue of frail, disorientated older people. When I go door to door, even in a relatively young part of the country such as Lewisham, I am

amazed by the number of older people living alone, barely moving out of one room. A failure to have an honest debate about that, and a failure to look at the evidence and come up with real solutions, will mean we spend the next few years focusing on completely the wrong priorities. That is my fear with the Queen's Speech. It is my fear about how the Brexit debate dominates everything else, and it is the responsibility of our politics, irrespective of party lines, to find some answers.

7.56 pm

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): There is a habit of some in the Labour party of making personal attacks on Conservative Prime Ministers. They did it with Ted Heath, they did it with Margaret Thatcher, and some tried to do it with our current Prime Minister. I think she has the common sense, resilience and sense of humour not to worry too much about that. It is far better that we understand that the leadership of the party can be tested by what people do in action, and during her years as Home Secretary, the Prime Minister had no hesitation in coming to the House, picking up the most difficult issues, and finding ways forward that were supported across the House. I am pleased to back her in what she is trying to do with our Government.

On the Brexit theme—I do not usually discuss that as much as my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash)—I think it will take twice as much effort to make a success of leaving as it would have taken to make a success of staying, but the people made the decision that we should go, so the responsibility of someone in my position is to give the Government the support that I can while trying to make sure that problems are recognised and solved as far as possible.

May I wish the new leader of the SNP in the House good luck? His predecessor, Angus Robertson, will be missed, especially in the all-party group on Austria. I hope that as he is no longer in the House he will regard himself as an honorary member of the group. Much of what he has done is much appreciated by successive Austrian ambassadors, and I hope that his input will continue.

I think that the departing leader of the Liberal Democrats was treated unfairly. It is crazy that one answer to one question can come back to haunt someone. The question of someone's view of other people's behaviour, as long as it is held privately, does not really matter. We ought not to say that someone's orientation or their answer to questions about what other people do should be a test of their political ability or leadership. I wish the Liberal Democrats well in finding a new leader.

To those who are arguing too much about the possible understanding between the Democratic Unionist party and the Conservatives, I remember saying a week ago on Monday, when the question first arose, and when 38 Degrees got everyone on its mailing list to write in saying that that was a frightful thing, that the alternative Government arrangement would be the Labour party trying to introduce an understanding with the SNP, the DUP, the Lib Dems and the Green party. The DUP would have to take part in that arrangement as well; without it, Labour Members could not be in government, so there is no point their pretending there could be an alternative Government by shaking their heads at the DUP. I hope that the DUP will read my description of

the shaking heads on the Opposition side who want nothing to do with them. We are clear that the Government will come from this side and my party.

I mentioned 38 Degrees. I deplore how it pretends to be progressive but not partisan. At some other stage, I will refer the activities of 38 Degrees to the Electoral Commission and the Information Commissioner. I cannot say that it has committed an offence, but I cannot say that it is in the clear. On the last day of the election, it put out something inviting people to see which party was closest to them. If all someone's answers were closest to the Conservatives, as the majority of voters were at the last election, there were then more questions trying to dissuade the person from thinking that they were what they thought they were. That is wrong. At present, the organisation is running its third campaign in a week and a half: there have been the DUP issue and fire regulations, which clearly will have to be reviewed following that terrible fire in Grenfell Tower, and today it is asking people to sign a petition about national health service spending. Such activity means that that it should be considered as a political organisation, and should meet the same requirements as political parties.

On housing, one of the big issues is leasehold properties. Up to 6 million residential leaseholders are exposed, by accident or design, to mistreatment by managing agents, some freeholders and, sadly, by some property tribunals and courts; I thank the hon. Member for Lewisham East (Heidi Alexander) for her interest and help in this matter. If courts and property tribunals feel that they have to make a judgment that is clearly unfair but goes along with precedent or the argument of some clever lawyer, they should say in their judgment, "We find for this party, but we declare that this is an unjust decision."

Mr Barry Weir, or his company, is the landlord of a park home site in my constituency who has used judgments and expensive lawyers to—in my terms—bully and intimidate. People spend £50,000 to buy a so-called mobile home on the basis that it is residential. It turns out to be for holiday use, and when Mr Weir or his companies get permission for it to be for residential use, he starts to claim another £1,000 a year. He takes people to court and they lose their £50,000. In my view, that is depriving people of assets that they ought to be able to keep. Through this House, I invite Mr Barry Weir to meet me so that we can sort things out person to person. If there is still a dispute, we will go to some outside tribunal and see whether the way he is treating people is right or fair.

The same applies to a freeholder called Martin Paine, who has given people extended leases but written the clause in such a way that even good solicitors fail to find the fact that he is doubling ground rents back to the start of a lease, not to the point at which they were extended. That would not be allowed as part of a formal extension of a lease; again, such behaviour needs exposing in public, and MPs can do that.

I return for a moment to the tragedy in Kensington. I first went to Golborne ward in the early 1970s, when I was setting up the second neighbourhood council in the country; the first was in Golborne. I have seen what has happened in some tenant management organisations. The question of responsibility is important, also in respect of the first reaction to the fire and how it was treated. The fire service will have lessons to learn and it will be happy to learn them. I think the tenant management

organisations will do the same. Clearly, the building regulations are wrong: it should not be possible to put up that kind of cladding in that material. However, people should not regard cladding as just aesthetic. In my first constituency 25 years ago, people were spending £30 a week to be cold in a tower block; after the cladding was fitted, they were spending £5 a week to be warm. That £25 a week and the fact of being warm made a big difference to people. We have lessons to learn, we will learn them and I say to 38 Degrees that it should stop trying to wind people up.

There is a side of the Labour party that I admire. I used to meet Bill Hamling, my first Labour opponent when I stood for Parliament in 1974—he was Harold Wilson's Parliamentary Private Secretary—at lunchtime on Saturdays. We would buy each other a drink and declare hostilities over until the Monday. He appears in many political plays, including "This House". I ask the people behind that play to revise how they portray Bill Hamling: he was not a foul-mouthed person. They should also revise their portrayal of Carol Mather, a gallant gentleman and officer and my wife's Whip—she was the first woman in his regiment. He is also portrayed as foul-mouthed, but he was not. People who knew them are still alive and we do not need that kind of dramatic effect.

I will campaign in my constituency for funds for a proper A27 that gives protection to local residents but makes it possible people to move through without traffic jams. With other west Sussex MPs, I will continue to fight for fairer funding for schools. If we had anything like the funding for schools in London, we would not have half the problems we have. I will work with anybody—parents and others—to try to make things right.

The job of those of us in political and public service is to try to reduce avoidable disadvantage, distress and handicap and improve wellbeing through a mixture of wealth and welfare. We can do it together. We should not have so many disagreements, and I commit myself to doing my bit.

8.5 pm

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): I begin by thanking the electors of North Durham for returning me to the House, which is both a privilege and a humbling experience. Again, I give them the commitment that I gave when first elected in 2001: to do my utmost to represent them in this place. I wish briefly to address three issues in the Gracious Speech: defence and security, Europe, and mental health.

The events of the past few weeks have shown that we live in deeply troubling and dark times, both at home and abroad. The first job of any Government is the safety and security of their citizens, and that takes two forms: defence through our armed forces and through the work of the domestic security services and the police. The threats that we now face are international and global; we cannot withdraw from the world and hide away. It is vital that we continue to engage with our international partners—and yes, on occasion, if we have to use force against those that threaten us, we will, to protect our way of life and that of our allies. My party has a long tradition of internationalism, and it is important that we continue to be an outward-looking and engaging part of the world. NATO was one of the defining achievements of the radical 1945 Labour

[Mr Kevan Jones]

Government. I was pleased by the continued commitment in the Queen's Speech to NATO and to the spending of 2% of national income on defence.

However, as is often the case, we need to look at what the Government do in practice rather than just at what they say. Years of squeezed budgets have resulted in the hollowing out of the UK's military capabilities; the Army is smaller now than at any time since the Napoleonic wars. The Navy faces a manning crisis, and the number of new warships being ordered is at an all-time low. Some of the operations that it should be doing can no longer be done. We are proud of the work done by the Royal Marines for the sake of this country, but the numbers of Royal Marines are to be cut to fill the manning gaps at the Royal Navy.

Morale among our armed forces is at an all-time low. Since 2010, they have been subject to a below-inflation 1% cap on wage increases; if I had suggested such a thing when I was the Defence Minister responsible for pay, those on the Government Benches would have been in open revolt. We can add to that the crisis in armed forces accommodation. The recent National Audit Office report says that the poor condition of the estate is affecting our defence capability. The Prime Minister has continued her predecessor's short-sighted approach to defence. The Ministry of Defence faces a multi-billion pound black hole in its budget. If it is not faced up to shortly, it will affect the way in which this country can protect itself.

The Government have also flatly refused to pursue a defence industrial strategy over the last seven years. They have gradually decoupled our defence procurement from our leading-edge defence and aerospace sector. Again, imagine the response if we had done that when we were in government. We now have uncertainty, with jobs and defence contracts being exported abroad. There is no regard to jobs in the UK or to the leading technologies this country is reliant on.

In the last few weeks, we have seen the dedication, bravery and commitment of our emergency services. However, after six years of austerity, we all know the pressures they are under, whether it is cuts in numbers or below-inflation wage increases. Rightly, there has been a debate in the last few weeks about police numbers in London, but we also need to have that argument about cuts in regional forces, especially in Durham, which has lost 325 officers in the last five years. All that the Government say about protecting police budgets—the Prime Minister repeated it again today—is complete nonsense. We have a flat-cash increase at the moment, which will mean another cut in future.

I was one of many who argued for Britain to remain in the EU. I have always been very passionate about that, and I argued for us to remain on the basis that it would be in the best interests not only of my constituents in the north-east but of the country. The decision was taken that we should come out of the EU, and I accept that, but it is vital that, whatever we do with our new relationship with Europe, we protect access to the single market, particularly for regions such as the north-east, which depends on exports to the EU and exports £7 billion of goods to it each year—58% of all exports from the north-east. It is not just the large manufacturers such as

Komatsu, Nissan and Hitachi that will be affected; it will also be their supply chains—companies big and small—throughout the north-east. If we get this wrong, it will affect not just those corporations, but the livelihoods of our constituents—hard-working families who are dedicated to their local communities.

We also need an early resolution on EU citizens' rights in this country, because the issue is damaging our economy. It is a strange thing to say, but one of the driving forces of the north-east economy is our regional universities, and they depend on EU nationals. If we get that issue wrong, it will affect the north-east.

I was pleased that mental health was raised in the Gracious Speech. We have made great progress in the last few years in raising the effects of mental health, but if we are to turn the slogan “parity of esteem” into action, we need increased spending, and it needs to be ring-fenced. Clinical commissioning groups are cutting their spending, and last year's King's Fund report stated that just under half of CCGs were uncertain or concerned about whether they would be able to pass on increases in mental health funding. If we get that wrong, all the warm words in the world will not bring about what we need on the frontline.

We also need to change the way in which we deliver mental health services. We should cut the large national contracts, because they exclude the voluntary and community sectors, which are so important. We also need to tackle the stigma around mental health and the scandal of our sky-high rates of suicide in society as a whole, but also in prisons. It is an absolute shame on this country that we have the highest suicide rates in our prisons. Is that down to the fact that these things just happen? No, it is not. I have talked to prison officers in my constituency, and these things are a direct result of the austerity in our Prison Service and the pressure people are under. That is making prisons unsafe for not only inmates but the people who work so hard in our prisons.

This parliamentary Session will be dominated by Brexit. If we get that wrong, it will affect all our constituencies. My constituents, and many others throughout this nation, want some hope. They need a change of direction in not only getting Brexit right but making sure we get investment and hope for future generations. I see nothing in this Gracious Speech that gives them that hope.

8.14 pm

Mrs Anne-Marie Trevelyan (Berwick-upon-Tweed) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for North Durham (Mr Jones), one of my colleagues from the north-east for whom I have the greatest respect. He was more than helpful in the last Parliament in helping me to find my feet.

It is an honour to be invited to speak in this great Chamber on the first day of our new Parliament. I would like first to put on record my thanks and admiration to our exceptional police force in the north-east and across the country. They were on duty and on high alert, keeping us all safe as we fought our elections. Alongside all our emergency services and our armed forces, they provided such extraordinary resilience throughout the truly horrific terrorist attacks in recent weeks and the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

It is a great honour and a responsibility, having been returned by my constituents in north Northumberland, to ensure that the legislative process, which has begun today with the Gracious Speech, and which is required to take the United Kingdom out of the EU, is met in full. At almost every door I knocked on across the north-east, the message was the same from leavers and remainers alike: “Please deliver Brexit properly, and get on with it!”

I am therefore proud to support this Government’s plans to deliver Brexit, using the repeal Bill to bring all existing EU law into UK law. The Gracious Speech is rightly clear that Brexit will be this Government’s absolute priority and that, as a strong union of four nations, we shall build new frameworks to continue our deep and special partnership with all our long-standing European allies; have the opportunity to create new trade deals with countries across the globe, supporting jobs across the UK; and have the flexibility outside the EU to support economic growth in developing countries. Free trade has been the greatest tool in reducing poverty for centuries, and I look forward to our great nations leading the way on that once again.

As an MP from the north-east of England—from the most northern point of the north-east of England—I am aware that its economic growth has remained behind that of other regions for too long. We are now seeing increasing export markets, as entrepreneurs look globally for new customers in leading-edge technologies. The opportunity for the UK Government to develop regional investment policy is most welcome. There will be no more EU funds—our money sent to Brussels, only to be partially returned to us with endless strings attached. We will be directly connected to the decision makers when it comes to how we get that regional support.

As the MP for the most beautiful constituency—I am happy to challenge all comers on that one—I have a large number of small farm businesses and fishing communities in Berwick, Seahouses and Amble. It is therefore pleasing that the Government will be introducing legislation on agriculture and fisheries as we leave the common agricultural and fisheries policies, and that we will determine our own long-term and sustainable plans in these important areas.

I look forward to clarification from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on how and when we will take back control over the UK’s exclusive economic zone, which I understand is 200 miles from the shore, or the midline between shores—otherwise we would be halfway into France before we started. Our fishermen need that clarity as soon as possible. My sheep farmers are also particularly keen to learn how the new trade deals with the EU and nations around the globe will ensure that their export markets can thrive and grow in the new global Britain.

As a result of Brexit, my constituents will now have a direct link to Government on all the laws we make and impose on them. At present, 60% of our laws are made by the EU, and we can only rubber-stamp them without amending authority. After Brexit is completed, and once we have left the single market and the EU’s customs union, the British people will know that, at last, their vote really can, and does, make a difference to how their country is run.

I for one am so proud of the British people for voting to get back control of their country and to take up once again the full mantle of responsibility for their country’s future direction. This is an exciting time indeed to be in the privileged position of serving as the Member of Parliament for Berwick-upon-Tweed.

I am also delighted that the Gracious Speech has confirmed that we will continue to meet our NATO commitment to spend at least 2% of national income on defence, though it is safe to say that, as a member in the last Parliament of the Public Accounts Committee, which focused on all matters defence—from the equipment plan to the reconfiguration of our defence estates and, most importantly, the continued and right support for serving personnel, veterans and their families—I shall be raising questions about whether that 2% is really enough and following in the footsteps of the former Member for Aldershot.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): I gently remind my hon. Friend that the 2% is the result of low management of expectations. As late as 1995-96—long after the end of the cold war—we were spending no less than 3% of GDP on defence, and many of us think we ought to do that in future.

Mrs Trevelyan: I thank my right hon. Friend for his intervention. We are at one on that. We can and perhaps should be doing much more to ensure that the Treasury can support the Ministry of Defence in the work it has to do.

If, in this Year of the Navy, we are to ensure that we can afford to build the ships we need to protect our nation’s interests in conflict and in peace, we must be honest about what it will take to do so. As HMS Queen Elizabeth prepares to leave Rosyth and start her long service as a beacon for our country’s commitment to NATO, she will need to be supported by many other ships, submarines and aircraft, and the brightest and best young men and women committed to serving their nation. It is therefore excellent to see that the Government will continue to invest in our gallant armed forces and deliver the armed forces covenant across the United Kingdom.

Alan Brown: Given that this is the Year of the Navy, and given the desire for an increase in military spend, does the hon. Lady agree that the MOD should go back to the original commitment on the number of ships it promised to build on the Clyde instead of the reduced number it has pulled back to?

Mrs Trevelyan: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. We need to look at this in the round. I hope that the shipbuilding strategy that we are expecting to come out from the Department very shortly will set forward that vision. We need to make sure that we here in Parliament are supporting the Department in ensuring that it can get the funding it needs—long-term, stable funding for that shipbuilding programme.

For this to become a reality, we have much yet to do. Most of the work on the armed forces covenant is not the Government’s job but the job of all of us as leaders, as businesses, as community groups and charities. We must, as a nation, really commit to our covenant to the men and women who choose to serve in our armed forces. It is for all of us to make clear our respect and

[Mrs Trevelyan]

gratitude, not only, though importantly, by buying a poppy or two for remembrance, but by learning to value the exceptional skill sets that these people have—self-discipline and resilience, technical expertise, and ability to cope under pressure—and recognising that military spouses and children also have extraordinary strength of character. It can never be possible to really understand what it must be like to be a nuclear submariner's spouse or child, their partner or parent away for three months or more, completely out of contact, with absolutely no idea where they are on the planet. These military families, whose devotion sustains our serving personnel in the Army, the Navy, our great Royal Marines, and the RAF are extraordinary people.

Our armed forces, and indeed all those across our emergency services who put their lives on the line every day for all of us, deserve our respect and gratitude. They should know that our commitment to the covenant is not just words but a determination across every Government Department, a commitment in every business across the UK, and a demonstration of our belief in it, as citizens of this great country of ours. They should know that they can rely on us to support them when their service lives need it, and that all veterans and their families, from every corner of our four nations, are able to lead fulfilling lives as civilians after they have served. I shall encourage the Government to consider creating, as we are doing in the draft domestic violence and abuse Bill, an armed forces covenant commissioner to give the oversight and encouragement to achieve these goals.

There is much to do to deliver Brexit and to deliver on our commitment to the armed forces covenant. I am very proud to be able to offer my service, as my constituents have so clearly asked me to do, in the months and years ahead.

8.23 pm

Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op): It is with honour, and humility, that I rise to respond to the Queen's Speech today as the three-times-elected Member of Parliament for the Stalybridge and Hyde constituency. I would like to record my sincerest thanks to all those who showed their faith in me, and to the steadfast people of Greater Manchester for their solidarity and defiance in the face of the terror attack we experienced during the campaign.

This was not an election that was needed; it was an election that was, initially at least, not really wanted. It was an election called in the partisan interests of the Prime Minister rather than the national interest. Frankly, who could blame her given the poll lead she enjoyed on the eve of that election? But as is so often the case, the British public took a rather dim view of someone who appeared to put their own needs before theirs. It now seems inconceivable that this Prime Minister will stay in office for the full term of this Parliament. She has gone from honeymoon to lame duck, with nothing in between.

As ever, analysis of the Queen's Speech should begin with a focus on the national interest. As yet, this Queen's Speech has no majority in the House of Commons and so will require the support of the Democratic Unionist party in order to pass. I strongly disagree with the remarks of the hon. Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley), because I find it unconscionable that any

British Government would even contemplate risking the Northern Irish peace process in order to prolong their own existence. Under the Good Friday agreement, the British and Irish Governments are the neutral arbitrators of Northern Irish power-sharing. It is simply not possible to breach that political neutrality and remain faithful to the terms of the agreement. The progress made in Northern Ireland in the past few decades is, for me, one of the greatest political achievements in this country in the post-war era, and we should pay tribute to the DUP for its role in that. However, the peace process cannot be taken for granted. The criticisms from Sir John Major were legitimate, serious and informed. They deserved an audience and they deserve a response, because the peace process is being taken for granted if the Government feel they can act in this way. The Prime Minister should be aware that the public would never forgive any Government, and particularly not her, if she again puts her own interests ahead of the national interest.

The irony is that the Queen's Speech we have heard today is so meagre—so limited in vision and scope—that the Government will have almost no legislative agenda at all. They may as well continue as a minority Government on an issue-by-issue basis. All the decent stuff in the Queen's Speech, such as the action on energy prices and the action on bad landlords that we have been promised, has been lifted from the last two Labour manifestos, so we will almost certainly be here voting for it, while all the unpleasant things that caused the Conservative party so much pain— austerity, the dementia tax, grammar schools, and scrapping of free school meals—will almost certainly get nowhere near a vote in this House. In that sense, while we may not have won this election, Labour Members can claim a significant victory from it.

This did not feel to me like an election about Brexit but an election about austerity, the state of the NHS and social care, the threatened cuts to school funding, and the desperate state of declining real wage levels. That is what people wanted to talk to me about. In my constituency, the fundamental economic premise of this Government, which is that prosperity lies in cutting public services and public spending to pay for cuts to corporation tax and other reliefs, has been soundly rejected. We need prosperity and competitiveness that is generated by improving our infrastructure and our education and skill levels, and a strategy therefore not just to generate jobs but to generate good jobs with good wages and good lives that can be led as a result. I am concerned to already hear SNP and Northern Irish colleagues compete over the additional resources they believe they will get as a result of this hung Parliament, because there is no policy justification, as a rule, for public services being funded more generously in those nations than in the north of England. The Government would be wise not to rouse the anger of northern MPs by compounding that unfairness. Public spending, wherever it is in the United Kingdom, should be determined by need, not by back-room deals based on Commons majorities.

Let me turn to the major issue we will be dealing with in this Parliament, which is of course Brexit. While the election was not dominated by it, this Parliament certainly will be. I agree with the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) on one aspect of his speech, which we have heard from him several times—that the language around “soft” and “hard” Brexit is not particularly helpful. The fact is

that we are leaving, and the conversation has to be about the bespoke relationship we now need to negotiate. My constituents, in the main, tell me two things. First, they want the immigration system reformed to end freedom of movement as it is currently constituted. That does not mean that they are anti-immigration—it just means that they want to see greater control of immigration. Members of this House may disagree with that view and cite the underlying economic data, but that is the genuine view from my constituency in the north of England. I recognise that there are those who are motivated strongly by resolutely anti-immigrant sentiment, but I do not believe that the majority of leave voters in my constituency could be described in such a way.

Secondly, I believe that many people want the UK to have the ability to negotiate our own trade deals with the rest of the world. That is a difficult issue, because there is no doubt that the customs union has created significant benefits, especially in cross-border supply chains, which play a particular role in the automotive industry. It is a paradox; at times, I find the EU to be too protectionist, too bureaucratic and too unresponsive in how it allows ordinary citizens to express a view and change the impact of its policies. The Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee looked at the matter briefly while I was a member, and I was—even as a remain voter—fairly shocked at some of the genuine case studies brought to us by British business.

I would like the UK to negotiate a close relationship with the single market, particularly to avoid the loss of any jobs in financial services as a result of regulatory changes, but with a new immigration system and the ability to negotiate a more open and freer trading relationship with the rest of the world. That, to me, would implement the result of the referendum, bring new benefits to the UK and protect the best of what we have now.

Of course, some sort of interim deal and interim arrangement simply must be put in place as soon as possible while we negotiate this rather complex deal. An interim arrangement is no use if British businesses are only told about it several months or years down the line. They have to know now, so that they have the certainty that will enable them to plan how to deal with the next few years.

Given the fact that, based on what we have heard today, the Government have almost nothing else to negotiate apart from the Brexit deal, they should get serious and drop the platitudes. We should not be hearing about a red, white and blue Brexit, because that is not a serious response to a huge moment in British history. Instead, the Government should take responsibility for delivering a new deal for Britain, and they should work with all Members of this House to deliver it.

8.30 pm

George Freeman (Mid Norfolk) (Con): Since the House prorogued, the nation has experienced some deeply shocking events: the appalling terrorist atrocities in London and Manchester, and the terrible tragedy at Grenfell Tower. I want to take this opportunity to send my condolences to all who were affected and to salute the extraordinary bravery and courage of our emergency services.

As we gather around the anniversary of the brutal murder of Jo Cox, her inspiring message that we have—and must celebrate the fact that we have—“more in common” has never seemed more relevant. As we seek to tackle the extremism in our society, the fact that this Parliament is the most diverse ever—with more women, more ethnic minorities and more Members with disabilities than ever before—is a good thing. We are, indeed, a House that has “more in common” with the people we serve, and that can only strengthen our ability to speak for them.

I think it is an understatement to say that this election result was inconvenient for all of us who wanted to be given a clear, loud and unambiguous mandate to get on and do all the things that we wanted to do. The truth is that the mandate is now in this House. It is in Parliament. We should not be afraid of that, and we should not seek to hide from it. The Prime Minister is absolutely right to have set about forming a Government, given that she leads the party that has the largest number of seats and that won an enormous 42% of the vote, which would in any normal election have been an overwhelming result.

It is also clear to me that we must listen to the grievances so brilliantly and, if I may say so, mischievously harnessed by Comrade Corbyn in his campaign. Above all, we have to listen to this message: the British people want us, as my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mrs Trevelyan) pointed out, to get on with it, but also to listen and to lead. There is no appetite in this country for another referendum, another election or, dare I say it, a change of leadership. Nobody will thank us for indulging in partisan politics or parlour politics when the country is calling out for leadership. I strongly support the Prime Minister in seeking to provide it in very difficult times.

I welcome the signals that the Prime Minister has given that she is listening, and I thank her for them. She is taking personal responsibility for the events of this nation, as we all should in public office. She has shown humility and contrition—not easy for the leader of a nation—and she has shown phenomenal personal resilience and duty to nation. Those are qualities that will stand her and us in good stead in the negotiations ahead. I welcome strongly her appointment of a First Secretary of State and a parliamentary chief of staff.

I welcome the fact that in the Queen’s Speech the Prime Minister revisited—oh, if only we had stayed on message during the election campaign!—the inspiring message of one nation compassionate Conservatism that so electrified the electorate last summer, not even 11 months ago. I welcome that message loud and clear today. I particularly welcome the measures in the Queen’s Speech concerning industrial strategy—investing in the jobs, businesses and companies of tomorrow, and in skills and education—which will spread opportunity to those who have felt, hitherto, as though we were building an economy that did not work for them.

It is clear to me that we need to do more to tackle the grievances that were so loudly aired during the election campaign and harnessed by the Opposition. There are three that we need to address. The first is that the youth of this country, who were awoken from their political stupor by the EU referendum, are confronted by personal debts and an intergenerational debt transfer—they have inherited from us £1.7 trillion of debt—and they are struggling to buy houses. That has become almost the

[George Freeman]

sole model in this country for building up equity and wealth, and they are largely excluded from it. They were casually assumed not to vote. Well, they did vote, and they are demanding that we listen to them. This party and this Parliament must do so.

Secondly, we heard a very loud message about an exhaustion with a particular model of public service austerity. I bow to nobody in my support for the conviction we showed in tackling the horrendous public finances we inherited from the Labour party, and I will never stop reminding people that Labour thought it was funny. Its Chief Secretary to the Treasury left a note saying, “There is no money. Ha, ha! Good luck.” Well, it was not funny; it was a moral outrage and I am proud that we tackled it.

However, it is clear that after seven years of a particular model of austerity, we have heard a loud roar from public service professionals—the doctors, the teachers, the consultants—that they have tightened their belts and they need a different model. I think that we need to set one out and that it needs to be based more on supporting innovation, on leadership, on rewarding public sector leaders who deliver more for less, instead of punishing them, and on unleashing public sector growth. The public sector could do a lot more to support inward investment and jobs. We must ensure that we skill and train our public sector leaders to take part in a 21st-century economy.

Thirdly, in an election that explicitly sought a mandate for Brexit, there was a clear and strong message from many, including from the young and from business, that they reject the shrill and divisive tone in which Brexit has been presented—the sort of “come on if you think you’re hard enough” approach to Europe. They reject the suggestion from some, particularly those on the extreme of the Brexit debate, that there is some magic trade deal tree, in the same way that some on the Labour Benches suggest there is a magic money tree. I think that the people of this country are reconciled to Brexit. Like me, many people in this country who voted for remain want us to get on with it, but they want us to be hard-headed, hard-nosed and soft-tongued. I think that we need to focus more on the life chances and prosperity of the people we serve.

What do we need to do? On the youth, I think that we need to look at a new deal for the next generation. It is clear to me that we need to look at tuition fees, the rate of interest and the structure of the loan book. We need to look at speeding up their access to rented housing. We need to look at a new model of saving for a generation who will not benefit from the post-war model of national insurance. We cannot duck the deep issues; we need to address them on a cross-party basis in this Parliament.

On public services, we need to embrace a new model to replace austerity 1.0 with innovation and efficiency 2.0. We need to embrace a whole series of reforms to drive the innovation we need in our public sector.

On Brexit, we need to be more business-like. I am delighted to hear the Chancellor say that the electorate did not vote to be poorer. We need to stop treating those who voted for remain as though that is some badge of shame. We need to respect the concerns they have aired. We need to engage this Parliament. Far from hiding the

issue from Parliament, I would immerse this Parliament in the detail of Brexit—every Select Committee, every Committee, every Member should be immersed in it. The Government do not need to be bound by everything this House asks for—they seldom are—but it would help to make sure that every Member of this House is fully aware of the issues we are dealing with. In the end, it will come down to three Ms: money, markets and movement.

As a former Minister for life science, a former entrepreneur and somebody who has been proud to work with great entrepreneurs in this country, creating businesses, jobs and prosperity, it is that constituency and the prosperity of my constituents in the relatively poor, rural backwater of Mid Norfolk that I am focused on through this process.

If we are to make this work as MPs, as a Parliament and as a Government, we need to approach it not in the spirit of ideological, partisan or nostalgic, backward-looking yearning for some ideal form of sovereignty, but by being quite hard-nosed about this country. In the best traditions of our foreign policy, we must put British interests first. I am reconciled to that. I think that a Brexit driven in the best interests of this country internationally could be a proud and wonderful moment. Is this the moment we turn in on ourselves, turn our backs on Europe, turn our backs on our allies and our great trading partners, or is it a moment when we respect their project and negotiate a new relationship as their best friend, their nearest neighbour and their biggest trading partner, while allowing ourselves to go off and access the emerging markets? Get it right and we will be thanked by the generations to come, but get it wrong and this party, this House and this Parliament will pay the price. If this becomes a narrow cultural cul-de-sac that appears to a younger generation to have shut off their access to the opportunities of the world, of globalisation and of the new economy, we will not be thanked.

In the end, it is up to this party, this Government and this House to unify this nation, and we can only unify a nation if we are unified ourselves. I hope that you will allow me, Mr Speaker, the indulgence of reminding the House that Abraham Lincoln’s family came from my constituency. He famously said:

“A house divided against itself cannot stand.”

The same is true of a Government and a party.

8.39 pm

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in today’s debate. I start by thanking the people of Feltham and Heston for re-electing me, and for the trust that they have placed in me to be their Member of Parliament.

We were lucky to have a Queen’s Speech at all this year, following a snap election that did not go according to plan and a coalition that has not yet gone according to plan. It is a Queen’s Speech that the Queen had not planned for, and that today saw 13 commitments from the Tory manifesto go unmentioned. We could be forgiven for thinking that the contents of this shortened Queen’s Speech will not last the two years that the Government intend. With the Queen’s Speech being as wafer-thin as the Prime Minister’s majority, there is a lot more to come in the next two years.

With the challenges that we face, it was more important than ever for the Queen's Speech to tackle the issues facing this country and leave a legacy for our nation. It should have been a Queen's Speech that gave hope to a nation and tackled the issues that we heard our constituents talking about at the election: a better future for our NHS; an increase in community police officers, with greater powers to tackle drugs and antisocial behaviour; more funding for our schools, which are now grappling with the impact of the estimated 8% cuts to pupils' education; the cost of education for young people going to university; more affordable housing for our families; and a Brexit that puts jobs first, that seeks the closest possible economic relationship with our neighbours, and that delivers the improvements in quality of life that people want.

After a difficult year, we have a nation that wants to believe that better is possible. The London mayoral campaign last year showed the Government driving the language and politics of division, and Sadiq Khan's victory was as much a victory for Sadiq and Labour in London as it was a victory for Londoners, and for the values of respect and inclusion that this country stands for.

We remember our friend Jo Cox and her inspirational life of love and of passion, so tragically cut short by hate. We think about the EU referendum, the rise in hate crime and Islamophobia and, more recently, the attacks in Westminster, Manchester, London Bridge and Finsbury Park, and the devastating fire at Grenfell Tower. They are all part of a growing sombre mood, but one that goes beyond terrorism to much that is of our making and down to the choices that the Government have made.

Some of the challenges are made clear in the 2017 social progress index, published in the past couple of days, which shows the UK ranking 12th in factors relating to basic needs, wellbeing and opportunity. Social progress has not increased in the past four years, and we are going backwards on key measures. The report's results also show how widespread the impact of austerity has become. There is disillusionment about the affordability of housing, rising crime, growing intolerance and poor health outcomes. Far from our seeing quality of life improving, things show every prospect of going backwards. Is it not devastating that we, as a developed country, risk creating a homeless generation with people being unable to get on to the housing ladder or living in cramped accommodation where they work? Our children and our families deserve better.

Destitution in the UK is on the rise. A report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation a year ago highlighted some key facts. The general public consider people to be destitute when they cannot afford to buy the essentials to eat, stay warm and dry, and keep clean. About 1.25 million people, including 300,000 children, were in that situation at some point a year ago.

After seven years of austerity, it is becoming increasingly apparent that there are those in this country who are suffering deeply due to the Government's policies. People are struggling to make ends meet. We live in a country where nurses are having to go to food banks, where last summer almost 10% of tenants in the UK fell behind with their rent payments, and where the percentage of council tenants on universal credit in rent arrears has increased to a critically high 86%.

The Chancellor said in his Mansion House speech this week that we need a stronger economy to generate tax receipts that we can invest in our public services. Let us put aside for a minute the £20 billion that the Conservatives' corporation tax cuts have cost this country; on his basic point, the Chancellor is right. The problem is the backdrop of an underperforming economy. We see GDP growth slowing in the first quarter of this year, wage growth slowing—the Governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, has called it “anaemic”—and proof with every step that the Government have taken that we cannot cut our way to prosperity.

Prices are rising and wages are stagnating. We need much more thought about how we Brexit, about transitional arrangements to stop a cliff-edge of tariffs and non-tariff barriers, about remaining part of the customs union and of a reformed single market, about protecting the rights of our young people, and about ensuring that we as a nation are not worse off.

If we want a proper growth plan, we need a wider economic plan for the future—and one for the long term. On the productivity crisis, UK productivity lags way behind that of other countries. We also invest far less than the OECD average in research and development. Improvements in UK living standards are much needed, and to achieve that we need wages to grow. Our future income will depend on increasing output per hour.

I welcome the Government's proposed new modern industrial strategy, which the Labour Opposition have called for. There is much that we share with the Government regarding how we move forward, but we can go much further. I would have liked a productivity Bill in the Queen's Speech to address the issues that we need to face to deal with our productivity challenge. The Government have made positive moves—the productivity plan and the national productivity investment fund—but, as the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee has said, the productivity plan was

“more of an assortment of largely existing policies”

than a new plan. The London School of Economics has said that although there are individually sensible policies, it is difficult to discern a clear growth strategy emerging from the plan. Without such a vision, it is likely that shorter-term considerations will dominate. We need a renewed and much more centralised plan that takes a holistic approach to the many ways in which we can drive up our productivity. We are looking for proper and solid partnership between business and Government, a much more thoughtful sense of how our wider net of tax reliefs can make a contribution, and new strategies for entrepreneurship that include women and business.

We need much more thought about how social and economic progress for all our communities go hand in hand. In the light of the growing uncertainty we face as a nation, and the need for us to consider much more thoughtfully the turning point we face, we need a strategy for how we go forwards and not backwards as a nation.

The Queen's Speech lacked a positive vision for our country's future. It should have had a vision for an end to unemployment and underemployment, with food banks becoming a thing of the past; a vision for children growing up without mental health issues; a vision for a nation that is proud, confident and prosperous; and a vision of a nation happy, with diverse communities living side by side with mutual respect. A vision of a better society was what our country needed, and I am sorry to say that this Queen's Speech did not deliver it.

8.48 pm

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): It is a huge honour to be elected to represent the people of Chelmsford and to make my maiden speech in this debate on the Queen's Speech. In the diamond jubilee year, Her Majesty chose Chelmsford to be a new city, and we are deeply grateful to the Queen. On behalf of the people of Chelmsford, I should like to offer her our sincerest thanks.

Chelmsford is a brilliant city. Our city centre is full of stunning new shops and restaurants. We have many excellent new homes and many outstanding schools. In Chelmsford, we are very proud of our local hospital—it is just over the constituency boundary in Broomfield—and its burns unit is recognised for its excellence across the world. Our 24-hour A&E is a vital local service. I am pleased that the Queen's Speech referred to the need to invest in our NHS and education, but also recognised that we need a strong economy to generate the income to pay for these services.

It is innovation that drives a modern economy. It is vital for competitiveness, and it delivers jobs and growth.

Chelmsford has a strong tradition of innovation. We are radio city. This is where Marconi chose to make his first radios and that heritage continues today, with the many local experts in wireless technology, including at e2v. Every time we see a photograph of our planet taken from outer space, the chances are that that picture was taken with a camera made in Chelmsford. We make the equipment that sends our digital communications from earth to the satellites in the sky and the same equipment that brings those messages back. Satellite technology is the fastest-growing sector in the global economy and the Queen's Speech sets out our commitment to underpin its future in Britain.

I am glad that the Government will also propose new measures to unlock investment in infrastructure. People in Chelmsford spend too much time in traffic jams and on delayed trains. It is a waste of our personal time and it hampers the country's productivity. A modern infrastructure is required for a modern economy.

Chelmsford was the birthplace of Sir Nicholas Conyngham Tindal. As Chief Justice in the 1840s, he first introduced a legal defence for those suffering from mental illness. I welcome the fact that the Queen's Speech calls for further action to support those with mental health issues.

My predecessor, Sir Simon Burns, represented the people of Chelmsford for 30 years. He is deeply loved by many people locally. He chose to make his maiden speech in a debate on the topic of young people, opportunities and skills. Sir Simon would take great pride in the fact that, in the past seven years, over 4,700 people in Chelmsford have started apprenticeships and that in this Queen's Speech we plan to introduce new T-levels for those who would prefer to follow technical, rather than academic, qualifications. In Chelmsford, we support both of these. The excellent Anglia Ruskin University celebrated its 25th birthday just last week. It wins awards for innovation, it is building a new medical school and planning a new biomedical cluster, and it leads collaborative research projects with many overseas.

The next two years are vital for the future of our country. Chelmsford voted 53:47 in the referendum and it is important that the terms of exit work for all.

Chelmsford's railway station is one of the busiest in the country. We are just 30 minutes from Liverpool Street and many of my constituents work in financial services. It is vital for them that our ongoing trade with Europe continues to be in services as well as in goods.

Other key 21st-century sectors, such as medical innovation, the tech sector and advanced manufacturing, also prioritise access to the single market. Such access must be underpinned by the principles of mutual recognition, based on trust and co-operation. Those sectors also need continued exchanges of skills and talent, and ongoing co-operation in science and research.

A British Member of the European Parliament has chaired the Internal Market Committee in the European Parliament ever since it was first established, right up to the night of my election to this House. As the most recent person to hold that post, I fully recognise that, since Britain voted to leave the EU, we must also establish a new and different relationship with the single market. There is a vast amount of support from pragmatic and practical politicians across the continent who wish to help us to find a deep and positive long-term partnership. The talks will be complex. The trading relationship between the UK and the EU is not that of Norway, Switzerland or Canada's relationship, and we cannot take an on-the-shelf model and cut and paste it into the UK-EU relationship, as economies on both sides of the channel would suffer.

There is a huge amount of detail to be agreed, not only on the terms of the exit, but on the long-term agreement and a transition that supports businesses and consumers in the interim. While we have many political friends, there are others who wish to disrupt these negotiations for their own political gain.

In Chelmsford, at the top of the High Street, near our beautiful cathedral, is the statue of the late Sir Nicholas Conyngham Tindal. The inscription tells us that his administration of English law was

“Directed by serene wisdom,

Animated by purest love of justice,

Endeared by unwearied kindness”.

May we all be graced by serene wisdom in these serious years ahead.

8.54 pm

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford) on being so quick off the mark, and being the first Member to make a maiden speech in this Parliament. She made a passionate case for Chelmsford, and she is clearly not one for messing around. It is an honour to follow her.

We live in extremely challenging times, and the past year has certainly tested the resilience of Britain and its diverse communities more than any time in my adult life. I offer my heartfelt condolences to everyone affected by the absolutely appalling events at Grenfell Tower last week. Like millions across the country, many of my constituents have been deeply shocked by what happened. Like me, they want to know that the Government are doing everything in their power to ensure not just that the community and those affected have all the support that is available, but that every possible lesson is urgently learned, and changes are made so that such a sickening event, and avoidable tragedy, is never repeated.

We have also faced horrifying and senseless violence in both London and Manchester, and, again, I offer my sincere and deepest condolences to all those affected by the terror attacks. On the evening of the most recent incident, at Finsbury Park, alongside my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah), I had the privilege of joining a multi-faith community iftar hosted by Newcastle's United Hebrew Congregation synagogue as part of the Great Get Together initiative in memory of our dearly loved and missed colleague Jo Cox. For me, that event—and all the moving Great Get Together events held across the country last weekend—could not have provided a clearer demonstration of Britain's determination that hate and intolerance will not divide us.

What has also been made exceptionally clear over the last few months is the incredible professionalism, dedication and bravery of those in our emergency services. I express my deepest gratitude to them as well, knowing how tirelessly they work to keep us safe, not just during the horrific moments that we have experienced recently but all year round. As I was leaving the Great Get Together event in Newcastle, I stood at the gate with a local police officer, and together we looked back at the scene. Inside the hall, people of many faiths and none were enjoying a buffet, some breaking fast together, while outside a number of Muslims prayed together on the grass just by the entrance to the synagogue. It was a very powerful scene.

I am greatly honoured to be able to stand in the Chamber again today as the MP for Newcastle upon Tyne North, and I thank my constituents for re-electing me with an increased majority—which was particularly kind, given that 8 June was my birthday. I am also proud to be part of the most diverse British Parliament in history, which contains more female, BME, LGBT and disabled MPs than any before, but make no mistake: there is always more work to do. What I am perhaps most heartened by, however, is the fact that my constituents re-elected me after we had championed a positive Labour message of hope and a better future for our local area and our country, as opposed to one of fear, negativity and division.

Newcastle upon Tyne North rejected a Conservative manifesto devoid of any vision, which, inexplicably, held that removing free school meals from infant school pupils and reintroducing foxhunting via a Government Bill in Government time were the sort of policies and priorities that the nation was crying out for. The Government have been forced to drop some of their worst plans, given that the outcome of the election has left their hands tied. However, I still worry that the content of the Gracious Speech shows that they are still not listening to what the public are saying about the urgent need for the economy, and the way in which the country operates, to work for the many and not just the few, so on behalf of my constituents I shall use the time available to me to set out a few of their many concerns.

This week, the Chancellor informed the nation that the Government are apparently “not deaf” to the message that they were sent at the general election, and that he has finally accepted that

“people are weary of the long slog”

of public spending cuts. Well, I can tell him that people in Newcastle upon Tyne North are way beyond weary when it comes to that issue. I look forward to hearing

what the Chancellor's damascene conversion will actually mean for public services in our area, including those provided by Newcastle city council and Northumbria police, which have had to make hundreds of millions of pounds worth of cuts since 2010, thus hitting people's quality of life. There has been a seven-year assault on local services as a result of the choices made by both the coalition and Conservative Governments: my city and its communities deserve better than that.

There was no clearer message delivered during the election campaign than the growing alarm people are feeling about the Conservatives' mismanagement and underfunding of our NHS and social care services. Anyone working on the frontline of our health service knows that it is at breaking point. Patients know it because waiting times are up—for surgery, treatment at A&E, an ambulance, mental health support, or to see a GP—while services and medicines are being rationed across England. Hard-working, demoralised NHS staff are increasingly being asked to do more with less, which is unfair, and unsafe, for them and their patients. Scandalously, in the sixth largest economy in the world, we now have nurses turning to food banks after years of NHS pay freezes, which I again urge the Government to bring to an overdue end.

Of course, the pressures on the NHS are being exacerbated by seven years of punitive cuts to social care budgets that have left the system in crisis and far too many older and vulnerable people without the vital care and support that they need. Meanwhile, 1,000 EU staff working in the NHS in the north-east remain in an unnecessary and unacceptable state of uncertainty about their future in this country. Our NHS, its staff and the people who use it deserve better than that.

There is anger that, as a result of the Conservatives' funding plans, schools in my constituency will lose up to £800 per pupil by 2021-22. The situation is placing intolerable pressure on local schools, which now face the stark reality of bigger class sizes, losing teachers, cutting subjects and axing vital resources, and all at a time when the Government have been determined to press ahead with their totally baffling obsession with diverting funds towards free schools and grammar schools; I sincerely hope the latter are now dead in the water. Instead, I want to know what the Government are going to do about the 5,000 children living in poverty in my constituency and the 3,300 living in families with problem debt.

One of the biggest issues for thousands of my constituents remains their plight after enduring unfair changes to their pension age, with little or no notification. Their totally unacceptable treatment at the hands of this Government, after several decades of hard work, national insurance contributions, caring responsibilities and often a lifetime of discrimination, is a burning injustice that I will never stop fighting for the Government to rectify. My constituents deserve much better than that.

As I have mentioned, one of the most critical concerns for Newcastle and the north-east is the creation of a fairer economy that works for everyone. We know that far too many people remain trapped in precarious, irregular and low-paid work. Of the new jobs created since 2011, one in nine is insecure. The people of the north-east deserve better than that, and it requires the creation of long-term, good, skilled jobs.

[Catherine McKinnell]

I welcome the announcement in the Gracious Speech on growing Britain's burgeoning space sector and on allowing satellites to be launched from the UK, but I will continue to press the Government to ensure that that will support businesses based in the UK, such as Spincraft in my constituency, to create and grow those good jobs of the future. I also remain concerned about Nestlé's decision to offshore 165 jobs, including 110 from its Fawdon plant in my constituency, and particularly about the Government's refusal to work with me, other hon. Members and the GMB union to work out how we can keep those jobs here.

It is unacceptable that Newcastle international airport, the single largest employment site in my constituency, still has no certainty about how the Government intend to mitigate the impact of devolving air passenger duty to Scotland in just over 10 months' time. Nor do we know whether any deal with the DUP to prop up the Prime Minister's Government will see APD in Northern Ireland on the table.

Mr Kevan Jones: Does my hon. Friend agree that the decision on APD will affect not just her constituency but the north-east economy? Newcastle international airport employs 3,000 people directly, but it sustains some 18,000 jobs throughout the north-east. It is an economic catalyst in the north-east and any effect on that airport will have an impact on the north-east economy.

Catherine McKinnell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right and comes to the heart of what the Government need to do. The Brexit negotiations have finally commenced. It is impossible to reiterate enough how important getting the right deal for the north-east and its people will be, because my region possibly has the most to lose from a bad one. Almost 60% of the north-east's exports currently go to the EU. I believe it is imperative for the UK to remain within the single market. Taking the single market and customs union off the table before negotiations had begun was a categorical misjudgment on the Prime Minister's part.

I understand that ad hoc meetings may have taken place, but there is still no commitment from the Government on how they will properly engage with the north-east on its priorities for the Brexit negotiations throughout this historic process. Nor is there any clear means or a forum for that to take place. Alongside all the other pledges I made to my constituents during this election campaign, I will continue to fight for a Brexit that puts jobs and living standards first, because the people and businesses of the north-east deserve much, much better than this.

9.4 pm

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell). I was particularly delighted to hear that she had a birthday on election day, because so did my son, and cake was all over the Rees-Mogg household on that day, as I hope was the case in Newcastle upon Tyne North. I particularly want to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford) on her absolutely brilliant maiden speech, and on being the first new Member to make a maiden speech in this Parliament, which shows a wonderful courage.

As it happens, the Chelmsford seat is the one I know from my earliest days politically, because my godfather, the late Norman St. John-Stevas, represented it—and got down to a majority of about 300 in his last election. I am glad to say that my hon. Friend has done a good deal better in her election. I listened to her speech, and her affection for her constituency, and her note at the end that it puts up statues to its most distinguished denizens, and I am sure that one in due course will appear to her. We are also very lucky to have somebody who so thoroughly understands European politicians joining our House at this time.

I now want to move on to the tragedies that have affected this nation in recent months: the terrorist outrages. We must never assume them to be routine. They have happened with increasing frequency—four of them in such a short time—but we must not allow their repetition to lessen our horror or our determination to win through.

Then there was Grenfell Tower, which I happen to think is an even greater tragedy as it seems to me that it was preventable. There is such deep sadness and horror at what happened there, and all of us in public life must ensure we work out how that can never happen again. Although it is often said that something should never happen again, it is not always within the power of man to ensure that that is the case, but with Grenfell Tower it ought to be possible to ensure that something of that kind never happens again.

I am sorry for that long preamble, Mr Speaker, but I thought it was important in these circumstances, before I move on to the Queen's Speech in the context of the general election.

We basically fought the general election in the way Stanley Baldwin fought the 1929 general election. He ran on the slogan "Safety first", and we ran on the slogan "Strong and stable". I think the two are the same, and they are both deeply unappealing. He lost in 1929, and we underperformed in 2017—I use the word "underperformed" for the sake of accuracy rather than as an effort at spin.

We have to ask ourselves why the safety first approach underperforms. I think the answer is that the voters do not feel that we are on their side; they feel instead that it is business as normal. Yet we know from the Brexit vote and the vote at the last election here—not to mention the United States and what has gone on on the continent—that voters are fed up with business as normal.

We must look to the Queen's Speech to decide how business is going to be changed: what are we going to do to make people's lives better? One of the titles of the Pope is "servus servorum Dei": the servant of the servants of God. That is how we should view our role—as the servants of the people of the United Kingdom, whom I happen to think are also the people of God. We must work to ensure that we can help them lead better, more prosperous lives.

Brexit presents a great opportunity, and one that we are not talking about enough. The lessons of free trade are that we produce better standards of living for people because they can buy goods more cheaply. The biggest burdens that the EU imposes are on food, where the tariffs are so high that we cannot really import any, and the biggest generators of revenue in this country are clothing and footwear. Therefore, what is attacked by the protection in the single market and the customs

union are the things that are the most important part of the basket of goods bought by the poorest in the land. We want to get rid of that, so that they can keep more income in their pockets to spend on the things that they want, or to save, with all the concomitant economic advantages that that leads to. People can then buy other goods or deposit money. Money can be invested and business can grow. If we move away from this protectionist European approach, people will have a higher standard of living. That is essential.

This is not about having bad regulations and a free for all. Many countries in the world that we trade with have higher standards than we do. The United States has different standards but it does not poison its people, and the Australians do not poison their people, but the goods that we buy from them would be cheaper, and that will help the poorest in our country.

We need to look specifically at some of the things in the Queen's Speech, and to stand up for those who have big business weighing down on them. I am not anti-business. I have been in business all my life—I am pro-business—but I note the statement that Her Majesty graciously read to us about tackling

“unfair practices in the energy market”.

Even I had Scottish Power writing to me to say that it would send in the bailiffs when it had sent me a bill that was nearly 15 times what it was meant to be. Frankly, it is all right for me as I am quite capable of writing back to the company and making sure it does not send the bailiffs round, but when such companies do that to our constituents, those people do not necessarily have that easy ability to get in touch with the right person and stop that sort of nonsense happening. Some of these companies are aggressive and skew the contracts in their favour. That does not mean that I want to see a price cap, but I do want to see fairness and to see us being on the side of our voters.

I want to finish on the subject of housing. Grenfell Tower has really brought this home to all of us. The problem with Grenfell Tower is a very deep-seated one. It goes back to the point at which it was popular to put up tower blocks as an exercise in social engineering. There are opinion surveys going back to the 1940s, and when people are asked what type of property they want to live in, 80% of them say houses; only 2% or 3% say tower blocks. But what did the politicians and the bureaucrats give to the people? We gave them tower blocks that they did not want, and there are now 4,000 of them blighting our landscape. We then decided that those tower blocks should be refurbished, and that refurbishment was very expensive. Hardly a penny seems to have been spared, except on safety. Those buildings might now be very environmentally friendly and they might look a little prettier than they did before, but although £8 million was spent on refurbishment, the £5,000 to make the panels fire-secure and the £200,000 for sprinklers was not spent.

This is the worst type of bureaucratic imposition, and we should be saying to any family that goes to sleep in a tower block tonight frightened because the building has the same cladding and whose children are having nightmares that, whatever the difficulty, we will find somewhere else for them to live. The numbers may be great and the problem may be vast, but we must show that we are on people's side. Then, we must recognise that people want houses, not tower blocks. We must

build them houses and get rid of the tower blocks, and then we must allow them, as Margaret Thatcher did, to become homeowners. If we do that, we will be on people's side. We will support our electors, and we will be, like the Holy Father, *servus servorum Dei*.

9.14 pm

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg). I pretty much agreed with the first four minutes of his speech, and with the final two minutes of it. In all honesty, that is six minutes more than I usually agree with him for.

It is a real honour and I am really proud to have been re-elected to serve the constituency of Kilmarnock and Loudoun, and I pledge to work as hard as I can for the next six months or five years, whatever length of term this is going to be.

I am also pleased to be elected to the most diverse Parliament yet—that is good; it was said earlier that there is more work to do, but at least this is progress in the right direction. I also have to observe that for the most part today we have seen the same old faces—or the lack of faces—filling the Benches. If we are to appear a more diverse Parliament, I hope that we will see more people filling the Benches and participating in future.

Perhaps the lack of participation or lack of occupancy of the Benches today is a reflection of the lack of content or quality in the Queen's Speech—I hope it is not because people knew I was on the list of speakers. Some of tonight's contributions have been really good. Those were contributions on terrorism, the victims, the language of division and the Grenfell disaster—things most of us in the House can agree on and work on, cross-party and consensually. We hope that is something that will be good in this parliamentary term.

We also heard more vacuous contributions—those saying that everything is going to be okay on Brexit, that the UK will get what it wants out of the negotiations, and that it will continue free trade deals to suit itself with the EU and free trade around the world, picking deals at random. That just does not add up. I have news for people: the days of the British empire are over, we live in a different world and it is time some people reflected that.

This was supposed to be the Queen's Speech that gave the Prime Minister *carte blanche* to do what she wanted, but instead, as has been said, we have a near empty Queen's speech. Given that the Tory manifesto was completely uncosted and ill thought through, it is probably not a bad thing that we are not getting too much from it. Such was the Prime Minister's arrogance that she thought she could duck out of debates and announce what she wanted, attacking pensioners with regard to the triple lock, the dementia tax and the winter fuel allowance. For me, that was proof that she still leads the nasty party. As she said herself, she needed a big majority to strengthen her negotiating position with the EU, but clearly all she has done is strengthen the hand of her Back Benchers and the DUP.

That brings us nicely to “no deal being better than a bad deal”. The Prime Minister has shown that that she cannot even negotiate a deal with her “friends and allies” from the DUP—worse, she did not even realise

[Alan Brown]

that at first. On 10 June, we heard an announcement, “We’ve got a deal with the DUP.” Then we heard, “We don’t have a deal with the DUP.” The Queen’s Speech was put back two days to allow the deal to be formulated, yet here we are and there is still no deal with the DUP. So how can we trust that Prime Minister to lead a minority Government and get a better deal with the other 27 member states of the EU? That does not add up.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is vital that the Conservative Government work not just across this House, but across the UK and start to re-engage with the devolved Administrations, particularly through the Joint Ministerial Committee being set up as a matter of urgency to take forward Brexit discussions?

Alan Brown: I thank my hon. Friend for that contribution. I wholeheartedly agree that it is imperative that all voices of the UK are heard, especially as Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to remain in the EU. Our different voice must therefore be heard at the negotiating table.

I thought it ironic that one pre-election tactic was for the Conservatives to turn attention to the Liberal Democrat leader’s views on homosexuality, yet post-election the Conservatives are teaming up with the DUP, a confirmed anti-gay-marriage party that lobbied the Scottish Government to try to prevent people from Northern Ireland travelling to Scotland for a gay marriage. Again, the hypocrisy is rank.

The Prime Minister is now stuck with her team and her Cabinet, whereas before she was making it clear that she wanted a reshuffle. She is stuck with a team she does not want and she has lost her majority—that is strong and stable for you! Recent tensions are clear, given the Chancellor and the Brexit Secretary now disagree about the need to be in the customs union. Again, where does that leave the UK in the negotiations? Apparently, the new Scottish Tory intake is so poor that a rejected candidate is now being fast-tracked through the Lords so he can work for the Scotland Office. What does that say about the make-up of the new candidates?

Given the Prime Minister’s weak position, it is clear that she does not have a mandate for a hard breakfa—*[Laughter.]* That is a dog’s breakfast of a statement! She does not have a mandate for a hard Brexit. She should review austerity and listen to proposals from the Scottish National party that will free up £118 billion for investment. That would include extra investment for the English NHS, which would of course mean Barnett consequential for Scotland. In the light of the papers leaked to *The Guardian* yesterday about the state of the NHS in London, it is time that Government Members listened to these suggestions.

It is imperative that the Prime Minister urgently reviews our energy policy. Her first welcome U-turn as Prime Minister was the pause in the approval of Hinkley Point C. Unfortunately, that was followed by another U-turn, meaning we would carry on with the project, full steam ahead. The project has increased costs, the strike price is way above the market rate, the technology is still unproven and there is no guaranteed delivery

date, yet the UK Government will not recommit to £1 billion of funding for carbon capture and storage. It is clear that, even if Hinkley comes on stream, the energy demand and technology available by that time will have changed vastly. They are investing in a white elephant.

Investment in renewables has dropped by 95%, and it is no surprise that the UK Government lag behind the Scottish Government with regard to CO₂ reduction targets. Meanwhile, their friends and allies in the DUP have the “cash for ash” scandal. I sincerely hope that the rest of us are not going to be asked to foot the bill for the half-a-billion-pound bill that has been wasted. The Tories are not any better: large-scale biomass is still being treated as renewable energy and subsidised accordingly. If we are willing to burn carbon, surely it would make more sense to burn indigenous coal and incorporate that into a carbon-capture scheme to eliminate CO₂ emissions.

The Government could probably get some other pieces of simple legislation through the House, such as legislation to protect cash retentions in the construction industry. The problem has been known about for around 50 years, and I was able to get cross-party support for a private Member’s Bill on the issue in the previous Parliament. I even had support from the DUP, so perhaps it really is something that should be brought to the table. If we want to increase productivity and have more efficient infrastructure, it really would be an easy start.

Needless to say, infrastructure was also lacking in the Queen’s Speech. We heard about HS2 being extended to Crewe, but we really need to see more infrastructure investment.

Another issue that could be tackled quite easily is section 75 of the Pensions Act 1995, which is causing misery and possible bankruptcy for Scottish plumbing companies. These are guys who signed up their employees for a decent pension but are now at risk of bankruptcy due to hypothetical debts arising from the regulations on multi-employer schemes. The Government held a consultation before the general election, but it was of course held up. We now have another new Minister, who is going to have to look at the issue and go through the whole process again. That really sums up the farce of it all.

I cannot mention pensions without mentioning the Women Against State Pension Inequality Campaign. This really is our last chance to reverse the Pensions Act 2011. It is time for the Government Members who joined the cross-party group, and who spoke in this Chamber to express their concerns on behalf of the WASPI women, to stand up and be counted. With the Government’s wafer-thin majority, it would not take many of those Members to join with Opposition Members so that we can get justice for the WASPI women. It was telling that today the Prime Minister was still quite happy to talk about her corporation tax giveaway. Surely we should be looking not at a tax giveaway to big corporations but at helping the WASPI women who need justice.

I bet Government Members really wish that the Prime Minister had got on with her day job and not called a general election; I know that a lot of people in my constituency agree wholeheartedly with that sentiment.

9.23 pm

Mr Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley) (Con): When the news came in of the attack on the Manchester Arena, the election campaign was rightly suspended. This cowardly attack robbed many people of their loved ones and hospitalised many others. I discovered that one of my own constituents, Michelle Kiss, was killed. She was the young mum of three lovely children, and she was a loving mother and the loving wife of Tony Kiss. I went to the vigil in Whalley, where the community stood together, embracing one another and showing solidarity for the family, who were in deep shock and were grieving. We all stood with them. Nothing better personified the community coming together than that concert in Manchester, where people stood shoulder to shoulder and enjoyed the singing of Ariana Grande. It was incredibly moving, and fantastic weather as well.

Whatever the intention was of the terrorist that day—it mystifies me—it brought people together. It robbed people of a loved one, and it hospitalised others, but for what? I will support any new measures to prevent the radicalisation of people in this country, to track down the terrorists and ensure that they cannot spread their hatred on the internet or anywhere else, and to ensure that the Prevent strategy is completely reinvigorated and that the police are given the support they need to do the job they need to do. Of course, since that atrocity, we have seen other terrorist attacks as well.

The Grenfell Tower tragedy was another appalling incident with a massive loss of life, and clearly we need to do what we can to ensure that whatever steps are necessary are taken to make tower blocks safe. The lack of money should not be used as an excuse for not doing anything. We know just by looking at it that the retrofitting of sprinklers and the use of second exits from tower blocks and proper alarm systems have to happen, irrespective of how much that costs. As has been said, there will be people living in such tower blocks tonight who are fearful about spending a night in what have to be deemed unsafe conditions. We must do what is necessary.

The election came as a surprise to me. The bigger surprise was the result. I am sure that we all held our breath as we waited for the exit poll, which was—sadly, as far as I am concerned—accurate once again. If only the Queen's Speech we heard today had been the Conservative manifesto, I think we would be a lot happier on the Government Benches. The Queen's Speech was the Conservative manifesto stripped of all the toxic rubbish we allowed to appear in it.

Taking school lunches away from children and replacing them with a bowl of Rice Krispies or an egg simply was not good enough. Fox hunting was seen as completely irrelevant to the people I spoke to, and I represent a rural constituency. The triple assault on senior citizens was awful, and we could not tell people whether they were going to lose winter weather payments or not. We said only that the rich would lose them, but what is rich? We could not say with any authority who they were. As far as the triple lock was concerned, people were fearful that they were going to lose money, and the so-called dementia tax—irrespective of whether it was or was not, that was how people perceived it—was appallingly sold without a proper ceiling.

The fact is that that has all been stripped out—but it cost us an election. I am delighted that some of the people involved in putting those things in the manifesto are no longer working at 10 Downing Street and that there is now a change in style of governance. It did not start with the current Prime Minister, but with Tony Blair and Alastair Campbell, and probably people before them, and it has just built up. I am delighted that Cabinet governance is back in this country, alive and well. At least this has all served one purpose. The fact is that, yes, we now have to rely on the votes of other people in this House to get the legislative programme through.

I am a Brexiteer, and I am delighted that we are going to leave the European Union, but we must ensure that the new opportunities of trade are realised, whether that is with the United States of America or, indeed, with the European Union. When we import £80 billion more than we export, the European side has clear interests in trading with us. Getting controls on immigration means that we cannot be in the customs union. We cannot be a member of the single market, but we will trade with it. All of that has to happen, and—this is exciting for me—Parliament will be the Parliament of an independent country where we govern ourselves with our legislation.

It is a mistake to go down from 650 to 600 Members of Parliament. We should look again at 650 Members of Parliament on equal boundaries, because when the legislation comes back from Brussels we will have a lot of work to do. People do not realise how much work there is. I have seen the workload disappear since 1992 when I was first elected. It is all coming back. Brace yourselves, everyone, because we will have to do a lot of work. I am grateful for the Gracious Speech today.

9.30 pm

Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): I am honoured to have been re-elected to represent the Brentford and Isleworth constituency. I congratulate the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford), who is no longer in the Chamber, on her maiden speech. She clearly has a deep love for her constituency. In respect of the four terrible events that have taken place since Dissolution, I share the sympathy expressed by hon. Members to people who have been bereaved and injured, gratitude to the emergency services, and concern that these outrages must not happen again.

During the election campaign, the voters of Chiswick, Brentford, Isleworth, Osterley and Hounslow made it clear to me that they were voting for hope and for change. Many people voted Labour for the first time, and my majority increased from 465 two years ago to 12,148. They voted against a hard Brexit and against the ongoing austerity policies of the Government. Many people in my constituency work in London's enormous finance and services sector. Many of my constituents are EU citizens, or are married to EU citizens, or work alongside EU citizens, or live near EU citizens, so they know directly and personally what leaving the single market will mean. They know that the single market is important to retain their jobs; to be assured that their employers can remain in London; to protect and build the UK economy; and to ensure that their EU spouses, neighbours and work colleagues have some security and the promise of a future. There is nothing in the Queen's Speech that gives comfort on those issues.

[Ruth Cadbury]

Many of my constituents told me that they wanted an end to austerity, because the NHS is going backwards, and there are still plans to cut major services at Charing Cross hospital. They can see how local services provided by Hounslow council and the local voluntary sector have been devastated in the past seven years of cuts, so that Hounslow council has lost 40% of its income in that period. My constituents want an end to austerity because they see how cuts to community policing have decimated the neighbourhood police teams that make them feel safe in these challenging times. They want an end to austerity because they have been denied adequate care services for themselves or for a loved one because of these cuts. People still working in the public sector want an end to austerity because after endless rounds of job cuts they are failing to do properly the work of the three or four posts that they are trying to cover. We need an end to austerity, which is a discredited ideology in all equivalent countries that not only decimates the public sector but exacerbates inequality and, incidentally, weakens the economy.

During the election, young people told me that they wanted an end to tuition fees that are saddling them with massive debts at the start of their working lives. They wanted an end to exploitative zero-hours contracts, which are usually the only jobs they can get for years, whether they are graduates or not. It is not surprising that there is nothing in the Queen's Speech for young people, given that we know from an article in *The Economist* that Conservative party central office apparently told local campaigners in my constituency, and presumably most others, not to worry about seeking young people's votes because

"They are not on the data set".

Parents and sixth formers told me that they wanted their good and excellent schools to continue to thrive, so mention of fair funding in the Queen's Speech gives them no comfort that the planned future cuts, entitled "fairer funding", are not going to go ahead.

Those on average and low incomes told me about their problems in trying to find a home that they could afford to rent, let alone buy. There is nothing in the Queen's Speech for people who need truly affordable housing. Those living or walking near our busy roads told me that they want robust legislation that addresses our appalling air quality that is so damaging to their health and that of their children—nothing about that in the Queen's Speech either.

People who will live under the inevitable approach path to Heathrow's runway 3 and those living under the approach paths to existing runways, where respite periods will be cut, are all hoping that runway 3 will not go ahead, but the Queen's Speech was surprisingly silent on Heathrow. There is nothing for the escalating number of people forced to rely on food banks caused by the cuts to the housing allowance and by housing benefit cuts and sanctions. In the last year, the number of users at Hounslow Community FoodBox has tripled as a result of the roll-out of universal credit by the Department for Work and Pensions across the borough of Hounslow. In my view, that is a legalised form of enforced destitution.

I now want to address something that was in the Queen's Speech: the supposed commitment to end the "burning injustice", as the Prime Minister called it, of the treatment

of people with mental health conditions. That very worthy aim is completely worthless if no additional funding is available in the NHS. It is hypocritical to promise specialist staff support in schools when this year heads have had to cut welfare support, counselling services and teaching assistants—the very people who were providing essential support to troubled children in our schools but whose posts are currently being whittled away under the current funding cuts.

Concern for mental health in the Queen's Speech, and from the Prime Minister, is worse than useless given that we read that the DWP has been forced to reveal today that 200,000 people with chronic mental health conditions are set to lose their employment support allowance. Now we know that "parity of esteem" for mental and physical health actually means equality of austerity for all.

Although my constituents will be pleased that there is no further mention of means-testing winter fuel payments, of boosting fracking, of reviving foxhunting, of the ending of infants' free school meals or of the roll-out of grammar schools, there is much that they would like to have seen. The Prime Minister said today that she has put fairness at the heart of the Government's programme, but the Queen's Speech has done nothing of the sort. Today, the pageantry was scaled down, and so was the Queen's Speech. I now hope, for the sake of my constituents, that the five-year term of this Government is also scaled right back.

9.37 pm

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate, and it was wonderful to hear the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford) a few moments ago.

I should start by saying that 8 June was an interesting day for me. The calling of the election came as quite a surprise, given that Hazel and I had already arranged to get married on the Saturday. Out of the window went the stag and hen nights; the stag night became an election count. Our marriage attracted quite a bit of publicity, as a result of Mr Macron's election as President of France. Our marriages were not the only thing we had in common: my 53% of the vote was not quite his 60%, but it meant that we were similar in two ways rather than just the obvious one that the media were so interested in.

This will be a significant Parliament, given the challenge of Brexit and the result of the referendum this time last year. The whole House will need to rise to the challenge. There will be difficult negotiations and we will need to look carefully at what is offered. We will need also to act maturely and responsibly, because the decisions made in this Parliament will be as significant as those between 1970 and 1974—the decisions that took us into Europe. I hope that we can have a genuinely mature and sensible cross-party debate. Sometimes such expectations are dashed, but I hope that on this occasion we can all see that the issue is not about scoring a cheap point for tomorrow's headlines or a few votes at the next general election, whenever that is, but about decisions that will affect the next generation. I hope that that will be the focus of our deliberations.

On my reaction to what we saw at Grenfell Tower, some may have seen that I was with some of the survivors earlier tonight on a Channel 4 programme.

I saw a man's eyes well up as he talked about five members of his family having been lost. I heard the frustration and anger of residents who had raised questions again and again about safety in their homes, and I heard about the issues that had been raised post the refurbishment. There is clearly a need for answers and for people to be held accountable for what has gone on. It is inconceivable that an £8.7 million revamp of a tower block does not include money for non-flammable cladding and a basic sprinkler system. The decision-making process at the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation needs to be looked at closely.

I hope that we as a Parliament will be given the opportunity to debate fully and openly the outcomes of the public inquiry that will report in due course, but I also hope that we see an interim report that tells us the likely cause. As was touched on in other contributions, people will be wondering whether there is a similar block or a similar risk in their area, and that is why we need an interim report about the likely cause, followed by a full public inquiry.

I hope that the Government, in setting the terms of reference and consulting on the inquiry, will be conscious of the need to get to a result slightly more quickly than we have seen with some other public inquiries. We do not want this to become like a tale of "War and Peace", when we could be getting on with debating these things in the House. I certainly hope that those on the Treasury Bench will make sure we have proper time in due course to debate the outcomes and to look at legislation. It is also important that any such legislation is enforced, and I suspect that that will also come out of the ongoing inquiries.

Let me return to the Queen's Speech and to my constituency. I am, of course, pleased to hear direct reference to delivering fairer funding for schools. For many years, for reasons now lost to history, Torbay schools have been some of the lowest funded per pupil in the whole country, and that desperately needs to be addressed. There are certainly inequalities issues in Torbay, and we are not just a leafy retirement area. We have real challenges, and our schools deserve to be fairly funded. That is why I am pleased to again hear a commitment on that issue. Yes, there will be a need to work through how the funding formula works correctly for all, but concerns cannot be used as a reason to stick with the current formula, which so disadvantages many children in my constituency.

Ours is a coastal area, and we have a fishing industry, so it was interesting to see a direct reference to fishing in the Queen's Speech. I think there will be some real opportunities from bringing fisheries back under UK control, and I hope we can have a strong debate about how we manage our fisheries for the future, because it is in everyone's interests to have sustainable fisheries. It is in no one's interests to go back to the idea that we could somehow go out, fill the boats up and come back in each day. There will need to be a system of management, and there will need to be agreements with the European Union and with our traditional allies, such as Norway and Iceland, about how the fisheries are managed. However, I certainly welcome the fact that there is a clear mention of the issue in the Queen's Speech.

It would be remiss of me as an MP representing a constituency west of the Dawlish coastal railway not to mention our hope not only that we have specific debates

about the future of High Speed 2 and its extension, but that we have strong opportunities, and the Government bring forward strong plans, to make sure that the south-west has the resilient railway it desperately needs. We cannot have a repeat of 2014, and we cannot continue to have a system where the tide times and the shipping forecast affect whether there is a train heading out of the region from my constituency, from Plymouth or from Cornwall. A solution has to be put forward so that we can make a permanent difference.

Finally, I was pleased to hear the references to technical education. South Devon College does a superb job, but it can only do so much. We need to enhance the status of technical education, and I hope we see a drive to deliver new institutes of technology or new universities focused very much on a technical agenda, because those provide the skills that are so desperately needed. If we want to grow our manufacturing base, we need people with the skills who are able to take the jobs.

As my time comes to a close, I remember my maiden speech two years ago, in which I talked about what my mother used to say to me—sadly, she has been departed for a few years. She always said, "Kevin, whatever you do, do your best." That is what I hope I have done over the last two years, and it is what I hope to do over the rest of this Parliament as well.

9.44 pm

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): There are so many challenges facing our country at this time, yet today we heard a Queen's Speech that is trying to save a Government in crisis but does not address the crises facing our nation, nor those of my constituents as they face them day by day.

This is a time for listening and reflecting on the challenges that we see as a nation, and of course we have been stopped in our tracks to do so. Lives have been completely shattered by the Grenfell Tower tragedy and the terrorist attacks, not least those of a lovely family in my constituency, when Angelika and Marcin Klis were taken from their children as they just went out in Manchester to enjoy an evening together. All who loved and cared for those people should not have to face such real hardship. It must make us reflect and change our ways, too.

The past few days have been particularly devastating. I think about Mr Omar al-Haj Ali, who described his brother Mohammad's final moments—my heart broke with his. As I saw the faces of the victims and those missing, many who were just little children, there was only word in my mind that would fit: "why?" Firefighters were confronted with dangers and scenes that no one should have to bear. Paramedics and surgeons fought for lives, as ever, and the community rose up to show every aspect of humanity, selflessly serving all those in need. It is all so numbing. As a politician, I want to have answers. I want the "because" that follows that "why?"

Three things have stood out for me. First, people knew. The concerns over fire safety had been raised by residents and by chief fire officers. They were raised at every level. After all, eight years ago, at Lakanal House in Camberwell, there was also a tragedy and lives were lost. Investigations had been made and reports were written, but then, as always seems to happen, the implementation was woeful. The plea from residents was ignored. Experts in fire safety were rebuffed and

[*Rachael Maskell*]

pushed away. Politicians voted against measures to create tenants' rights. There were other priorities—a driven ideology to cut red tape, no matter the cost. There was not enough money in the right places, so corners were cut, but of course mainly for the poor. In one of the richest communities in the country, no one had the capacity and time to listen to one of the poorest. While they were clearly proved to be right, the price they have had to pay is all too costly.

While I welcome the announcement of a full public inquiry in today's Queen's Speech and the independent public advocate to act on behalf of the bereaved, the Government should have introduced legislation to replace the current failed system, deal with gaps in safety, and provide a capacity for redress when those in a position of trust fail in their duty. When politicians fail the public, we need an independent centre for whistleblowing where concerns can be raised. We can no longer have a system in which failed politicians and their failed legislation suppress ordinary people. Everyone needs an authoritative outlet for their concerns, whether they are residents or professionals working across services. These issues not only must have a space to be aired; they must be investigated, and action must follow. Let us have the inquiry to avoid a tragedy rather than afterwards. This, of course, affects all sectors.

Secondly, we need a robust system for assessing risk. The Health and Safety Executive has been slashed in two, the Care Quality Commission is running on a budget that is not matching growth in demand, and fire authorities across the nation have been cut deeply. In North Yorkshire, 25.4% has been cut out of the fire service. The very institutions that are meant to keep us safe have been cut while increased demands are made on them. As we have heard in recent days, policing and our national security have also been compromised, with 20,000 police officers being cut, and indeed border staff. Even our armed forces have been cut, as we have heard in today's debate—the Army by 20%. While Her Majesty's Speech recognises the issue of security and the risks that we have been raising for the past couple of years that I have been here, we all have to recognise that cuts have consequences. We therefore need proper governance over systems.

I witnessed this when the floods came to York on Boxing day in 2015, with 453 households and 174 businesses flooded. There was no plan to act if the River Foss flooded, and no risk assessment on the Foss barrier if it should flood. Therefore, we ended up with the local authority and the Environment Agency marking their own homework. We have to ensure that there is independent external scrutiny of all safety measures.

Thirdly, we have to ask what politicians in this Parliament are doing. In my two years here, I have had to chase, chase and chase again on the issues that impact on my constituents. I had to wait four months to get a debate on the closure of Bootham Park hospital, which closed in just three days. That closure left the mental health community in York in crisis, and it has been in crisis ever since. I have chased Ministers down corridors and fought for my constituents. I received a promise two years ago that a Minister would visit the mental health community in my constituency, but that still has not happened. The measures in the Gracious Speech must

be more than just words; they must be turned into action. The Government have to listen to the real needs of our communities.

The housing crisis, which I have talked about so much, is getting worse and worse in York. There are still 1,600 people on the waiting list and people are living in tiny rooms, but the Government fail to build the houses that are needed, which we have been promised for so long.

Around 2,500 job losses have been announced over the past six months, including those of 156 Nestlé workers just before Dissolution. The Prime Minister could only point those workers to the job centre, rather than fighting for our future economy.

Yes, the system seems so broken. It is the poor, the sick and those who face the greatest challenges who are really struggling at this time. We have to stop the games and the name-calling—they must end. The questions must be answered and the Government must now respond.

9.51 pm

Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): I thank all the voters of the Chesterfield constituency who, for the third time, have done me the honour of sending me back to this place. As the final speaker in today's debate on the Queen's Speech, it comes as little surprise to me that today we have learned that the Prime Minister's head of policy is the latest adviser to leave the sinking ship. Not only did today's Queen's Speech tell us that this is a Government in search of a programme, but it was the first ever Queen's Speech that was more noted for what was not in it than for what was.

Never before have we seen a more charmless and negative prescription from any party than the one that we saw in the most recent election, and today we see what is left: a Prime Minister who is in office but not in power, and a Government without a majority or much of a plan for what they want to do with the power they cling to. They are neither strong nor stable, nor particularly able, and they are not certain of whether they even have a partner with which to complete their programme.

I was intending to spend a little time talking about some of the measures that all those votes for Labour MPs have prevented, but the passion and lucidity with which the Conservative programme was savaged by the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr Evans), who stood on it, suggested to me that if we cannot take apart the Tories' manifesto as passionately as they can, perhaps we should just leave that part of the equation where it is. It is true to say that a strong and stable Tory Government implementing the manifesto that they stood on would have taken money from pensioners, would have taken school meals from infants, would have taken homes from bereaved families and would have further weakened our public services, so today we celebrate the Labour victories, because although they left us short of the victory that we wanted, they have made a real difference to the programme that is in front of us.

Although the Queen's Speech lacks ambition and detail, it is a Queen's Speech that has the shadow of Brexit looming large over it. There will be considerable debate about the shape of Britain's post-Brexit future. It is right that this should be an opportunity for the Government to stop and think about how they can deliver a Brexit that works for the 48% as well as for the 52%.

I know that colleagues on both sides of the House—many of them Labour Members—are keen to try to maintain Britain's place in the single market as the key priority, but I have to say that it would be premature for us to go down that route. We may well find in a year's time that the Norway option is the best solution, but we have not yet started the negotiations in any meaningful way. If all we can say to those who voted leave is that they have to accept that we will continue to have freedom of movement throughout the EU, they will absolutely believe that they have been misled about what they voted for in the referendum.

We need to proceed with tremendous caution. Let us see whether the Foreign Secretary can deliver the kind of Brexit that he promised in advance of the referendum. If he cannot, he will have to come back and explain why that cannot be achieved, and we will then have to ask whether the single market is indeed the best option for us to pursue.

There is no doubt in my mind that if there had been no prospect of our immigration rules being changed, there would have been no victory for Brexit in the referendum. It is important that the Government confess to and admit that. Yes, there were people in Chesterfield who recognised the massive benefits that immigrants have brought to our country. I was disappointed that the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) said that any talk about immigration made somebody anti-immigrant. I am not remotely anti-immigrant. Many of the people in my constituency who voted leave want the German anaesthetist here, the Kenyan heart surgeon here and the Singaporean nurse here, but they also want us to have some controls on that immigration. If, as has happened all the way through, anyone who raises the question of immigration is automatically said to be against the immigrants who have made such a great contribution to our society, we should not be surprised when the voters think we are not listening to them. I was therefore disappointed when the right hon. and learned Gentleman said that in his speech today.

I recognise the extent to which a better educated, more highly skilled, more diverse and more outward-looking country has been the result of the immigration we have had, and so would many people in my constituency. I regret that all of us in this place have not done more to discuss the economic benefits that immigration has brought to our country. I speak to pensioners who say, "I've worked all my life. I've paid into my pension." I respond, "No, you've worked all your life and you've paid your mum and dad's pension. Now someone has to pay yours." Immigrants come at working age, when they are young and healthy, and make an important contribution.

I hope that the immigration Bill that the Government bring forward will enable us to conduct a full and

detailed analysis of the economic and social implications of future immigration policy. If, as a result of cutting immigration—the Government have spoken about that over a long period of time, but have not achieved it—we will be poorer, it is incredibly important that we make people aware that that is what we are saying. The truth is that the immigration policy for those outside the EU has failed to achieve the immigration target that the Government have set, so we need to be candid about what faces us. I will welcome the new immigration Bill, but only if it allows our country to have the discussion we should have had long, long ago. The vast majority of my constituents welcome skilled labour in the workplace, recognise that hard-working, young, fit and skilled employees offer a financial benefit to our country, and want Britain to send out the message that we still want to attract such people so that we have a chance of competing in the 21st century race.

Voters in Chesterfield who voted to leave expect us to continue trading, to control who comes into the country, and to stop contributing to an institution that we are no longer a part of. That was the promise they were made by the Foreign Secretary and others during the campaign. If that promise can be delivered, the mandate for Britain to leave the EU is clear. However, if it cannot be delivered—if the Government are going to make it more difficult for British businesses to compete in the global marketplace, if they are not going to have the controls on immigration that they promised and if the post-Brexit Britain they promised was a cruel illusion—there will be no mandate for the Government to carry on with a programme that fails to keep the promises they made.

The Government will shamle on, with or without a DUP deal, until the end comes. If the Government were a horse, they would be on their way to the glue factory. There is important work ahead for all of us. I urge the Government to adopt a cross-party approach to Brexit. Most of all, I say to the Government that if they run out of ideas, they should get out of the way and hand over to a party that has not.

Mr Speaker: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman, the last contributor to our debate, for saying so explicitly to the House what he really thinks.

Ordered, That the debate be now adjourned.—(Chris Heaton-Harris.)

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Mr Speaker: That has been done with seamless efficiency. Those of us in the know will recognise the desirability of preventing an unnecessary interruption of the speech to be made in a moment by the person who has the Adjournment, for which respite I feel sure he will be extremely grateful.

Telephone Calls to the DWP

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Chris Heaton-Harris.)

10 pm

Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP): It is a pleasure to see you in your place, Mr Speaker. Congratulations to you on your re-election, Sir.

I would first like to thank the voters of Glasgow South West for sending me back to Parliament. They have re-elected a left-wing anti-austerity Member of Parliament, which is what I pledged to be during the election campaign.

There are many divisions in the House of Commons—literal Divisions when we troop through the voting Lobbies, party divisions both between and within, and differences in age, gender, ethnicity and education. However, I am now coming to the view that one of the biggest differences is between those of us who view social security as a right that should be administered with the utmost care for human dignity and those who view it as a privilege that can and should be denied or strictly limited.

I believe that there are two types of MP—those who view “I, Daniel Blake” and see the reality of their casework reflected in the film, and those who refuse to believe that the social security system is rigged and is actively pushing working people into poverty and punishing the most vulnerable in society. I am not suggesting that the only way an MP can gain insight into the failings of the social security service is by dealing with hundreds of Department for Work and Pensions cases, but surely anyone with an ounce of empathy would know that the system is deeply flawed, even if they have had only a handful of distressed people at their surgeries.

In the opening scene of “I, Daniel Blake”, the character is on the phone for more than an hour. I am sure I am not the only Member of Parliament who has had constituents telling them about similar cases. Here are just some of mine: a jobseeker’s allowance claimant who has told me of a phone call that cost £9; an employment and support allowance claimant who has told me of a phone call that cost them £16; and a constituent pursuing a disability living allowance claim on behalf of his daughter who has told me of a phone call that cost him £18. I ask the Minister and the House, is it right that a JSA claimant receiving £73.10 a week needs to make a phone call costing £9 to receive their entitlement? Is it right that an ESA claimant receiving £73.10 a week needs to make a phone call costing £16 to receive their entitlement? Is it right that a DLA claimant receiving a weekly entitlement of £76.90 has to make a phone call costing £18?

Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): My hon. Friend is talking about the injustice of the amount of money that people have to pay. Does he agree that many people have no money because of broken promises on their payments, which is driving them to food banks as their last resort?

Chris Stephens: I do agree. In fact, I would say that food banks have probably been the only growth industry in the United Kingdom in the past seven years, as many Members of Parliament can see.

I believe the answer to the questions that I have just asked the Minister is no. The reason I continue to campaign on this telephone tax is that it adds insult to injury. It is just one more financial kick in the teeth when people are paying for access to information and support. When every penny counts, call charges hit hard, and the lack of clarity as to which lines are free and which ones come with a cost does not help. The Government’s own website states that some telephone calls can cost 55p a minute. Can the Minister confirm whether the gov.uk website provides accurate information on charges for calls to the DWP?

Call charges do not just eat into people’s benefits; I suggest that they actively deter people from calling for because they fear incurring charges either from the lines themselves or from a mobile phone provider. As I look deeper into the issue and ask more questions, more disturbing information comes to light. There are serious flaws in the digital-by-design model. Exclusion is built into the system. A written question I tabled just before Dissolution revealed that, in the whole of the Glasgow South West constituency, there are only 16 PCs for thousands of claimants. I am sure the Minister will be happy to know that a few follow-up questions are on the way to him, but today he could answer these: what are the Government going to do to increase computer literacy and access in DWP offices; and does the Department for Work and Pensions agree that those who have received a financial penalty—a sanction—or who have been paid late should have to pay for a telephone call to the DWP to chase up their entitlement? I am calling for free phone calls to access every aspect of the Department for Work and Pensions, but especially for those who have been sanctioned or hit by late payments. Someone paid late should not have to access a chargeable phone line to chase up money they are owed by the state.

Incredibly, there are no telephone lines at all for universal credit claims or inquiries—it is a completely digital service. What about those with no digital access, or who are not computer-literate or even literate? I accept that that is a whole other issue, but we need to recognise that basic literacy skills are not universal, and nor is English everyone’s first language. Will the Government consider a special telephone line for universal credit claimants?

I have already said there are issues with mobiles and price plans. I am calling for the Government to work with mobile and landline providers to improve that. A price plan can determine what someone pays in reality, but if they go over and above those limits, they incur penalty charges and costs increase. Since April, penalty charges on non-inclusive calls have increased dramatically, meaning that someone on a lengthy call to the Department for Work and Pensions will see the cost escalate.

The Government promised a review following the 2016 Social Security Advisory Committee report, which criticised the Government and asked for free phone lines to be put in place. The Government stated that that would cost £7 million, but they also made a number of recommendations, including having a call-back system. Like many a frustrated claimant, we are still waiting. When can we expect the review to be published, and will it include working with mobile and landline providers to reduce, and as far as possible eliminate, costs for DWP claimants? Is £7 million not a small amount of

the overall Government budget to ensure that the most vulnerable and those in need do not pay for telephone calls that they cannot afford?

It is bad enough that official helplines hit callers with added costs, but on top of everything else, there is a thriving business in ripping off the vulnerable—the so-called call connections websites, which advertise Government services phone numbers and claim to provide a service. In essence, they are fake premium-rate connection numbers. The Government have described them in a ministerial response to me as unethical but not illegal.

What action is the Department for Work and Pensions taking to eliminate advertised call connection numbers, which are charging premium rates to the most vulnerable in society? Is it not time that we stopped those scammers? The Fair Telecoms campaign has done good work on exposing those scams, and has called for Ofcom and the Phone-paid Services Authority to take the necessary action. However, I would suggest that the Government need to take a lead and work with the authorities to stamp out that practice. Will the Minister commit to doing that and meet the relevant parties to take action?

Failure to act on the concerns raised by me and those who campaign against the telephone tax would indicate that this is not a priority for the Government, and that fairness and social justice do not feature high on their agenda. My concern is that Brexit will skew Government time and attention away from addressing these issues, but I intend to use as much parliamentary time as is available to me to keep this front and centre. Financial penalties and hardship are being inflicted on people every day because the inquiry lines and support services are not fit for purpose.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): My hon. Friend talks about services that are not fit for purpose and mentioned the need for people to access computers in places such as jobcentres. Does he agree that we urgently need clarity on the future of Glasgow's jobcentres? Precisely for the reasons he outlines, they need to be saved.

Chris Stephens: I thank my hon. Friend for that excellent intervention. He is correct. It is unacceptable that Glasgow has been asked to close half its jobcentres. Half the jobcentres are under threat in some of the most deprived communities in our city. I hope the Government will reflect what we are told is today's compassionate conservatism and take a step back from that proposal.

The Government's own estimate is that there are £292 million of unclaimed pension credits and unclaimed state benefits. I pledged in my election address to work with pensioner groups to improve take-up of these entitlements, for that is exactly what they are: earned benefits, not a Government charity handout to be granted to those deemed sufficiently worthy. I also pledge, along with my SNP colleagues, to fight for justice for the Women Against State Pension Inequality campaign. I strongly believe that, far from enforcing a brutal sanctions scheme, Department for Work and Pensions staff could be more usefully deployed helping people to claim what they are entitled to, instead of hounding the vulnerable. The impact that has on claimants' mental health should not be underestimated. I am also chasing up how many staff vacancies are unfilled in the Department for Work and Pensions, whether through budget pressures or high turnover.

In conclusion, I must bring it to House's attention that today is a highly significant day, and I do not mean because of the delivery of a threadbare Queen's Speech, devoid of vision. Today, legislation was tabled in Scotland's Parliament—the Social Security (Scotland) Bill—that will give Ministers the power to deliver 11 benefits, including disability living allowance, personal independence payment, carer's allowance and winter fuel payments. Jeane Freeman, the Minister for Social Security, said today:

“Dignity and respect is at the heart of our social security policy—a marked contrast to the approach that the current UK Government is taking as their unjust welfare cuts continue to cause misery,”

and

“push more people into poverty”.

The Scottish Government will remove the private sector from disability benefit assessments—a clear demonstration of the fact that when powers are devolved, we use them to bring fairness and tackle injustice. I could wish that all powers were available to enable us to shape Scotland's future, but where we can, we will act. Indeed, I am happy to confirm an exclusive: under the Scottish Government's approach to telephone calls, there will be no rigid script but a more holistic approach to those seeking advice and entitlement, and, most important of all, all calls to the Scottish Government's social security service will be free to those seeking entitlement. That shows once again what is possible if there is the political will. I look forward to the Minister's response to my many questions.

10.12 pm

The Minister for Employment (Damian Hinds): I congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow South West (Chris Stephens) on securing this debate on the cost of calling the Department for Work and Pensions. I also thank him for his continued interest in these important matters.

At the DWP we seek to ensure the correct balance between delivering high levels of customer service and experience and balancing the demands on the public purse and therefore protecting the taxpayer. The DWP's policy is that calls to claim benefit should be free, so it uses 0800 telephone numbers for such calls. The Department uses 0345 telephone numbers where customers call for other reasons. These are calls that typically take less time to resolve. The exception to this is universal credit, as the service is designed to be accessed online and telephone services are used as a fall-back.

Drew Hendry: The Minister says that those services are supposed to be online. Does he realise that accessing them online is not always an option for people in rural areas? That is why phone calls are so important for people in rural constituencies, as well as others who cannot access them online.

Damian Hinds: Yes, of course I recognise that. I represent a rural constituency myself, and it is important to have other options available where necessary. It is also the case that when we are dealing with people seeking work, for example, being able to get online is vital for that purpose. That is one of the reasons why we also ensure IT provision inside jobcentres.

[Damian Hinds]

It would not be an effective use of public money to build universal credit around a freephone telephone number, but where customers need to call DWP regarding their claim, it is through an 0345 number. The costs of calling an 0345 telephone number are set by individual providers, but they are never more than the cost of calling geographic numbers, which have 01 and 02 dialling codes. Calls to 0345 telephone numbers are typically included in any free or inclusive minutes in a caller's landline or mobile telephone contract. Although there are a multitude of service providers and tariffs, I can confirm that calls to 0345 telephone numbers are included in bundled minutes for mobile services by the biggest providers—EE, 02 and Vodafone—as well as most of the others.

I know that in the past the hon. Gentleman has raised the use of more expensive 0845 telephone numbers. I am pleased to be able to confirm that the DWP does not use 0845 telephone numbers in any of its communication channels. We replaced 0845 numbers with 0345 numbers during 2014 and 2015. That process was completed before the Ofcom changes in call charges came into effect in 2015, making calls to 0845 numbers more expensive. After the DWP 0345 numbers were introduced, customers calling an old DWP 0845 telephone number would receive a recorded message informing them that they should dial the correct 0345 number. There was no charge for the call to the old 0845 telephone number.

I appreciate, of course, that some of the most vulnerable people in society have to contact DWP services, which is why, if callers express concern about the cost of a call, we offer to call them back. The Department provides controlled access to telephones for claimants in jobcentres, when required, to help with any benefit inquiries. It has also expanded its “once and done” service centre approach across its working-age, disability and specialist sites, so that it can meet a claimant's needs during the first call whenever possible. It continues to review and identify opportunities for integrating telephony and benefit-processing activity further to improve the service it delivers.

The Department is proactive in considering how further to reduce any potential cost impact on customers when they need to transact business. As Members will know, in delivering welfare reform, universal credit is designed to be accessed online, with telephony services used as a back-up. The universal credit experience is delivering an effective channel shift away from the use of telephony, with over 90% of new claims made through digital interfaces and away from the telephone.

Chris Stephens: Will the Minister give way?

Damian Hinds: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, we will see how the time goes.

A telephony option is always available to people who may not have internet access, or who are experiencing difficulties in accessing the service online.

The DWP is also seeking to exploit new and emerging technology to keep in touch with claimants. We have introduced SMS text messaging for a number of service lines to confirm to customers receipt of their claims, information or documents, or to let them know when they can expect an outcome. Those changes reduce

contact from claimants chasing updates, while increasing the overall customer service experience. The service operates for new claims for employment and support allowance and jobseeker's allowance, and was introduced more recently to acknowledge receipt of fit notes.

The Department is developing a strategy across all the services it delivers, which will allow us to carry out a safe transition of our key telephony platforms and consider how to make best use of new technologies and contact channels. Given the complexity of the services that the Department delivers and the range of customers with whom we interact, it is vital to ensure that we really understand the range of services that citizens need in order to interact with us. I am sure Members appreciate that a “one size fits all” approach would not be successful. The Department has to strike the right balance between the cost to callers and the cost to taxpayers, which is why a mixture of freephone and paid—but never premium-rate—telephone numbers is available to citizens. As the hon. Gentleman said, if the 0800 numbering range were extended to all service lines, it would cost the taxpayer an additional £7 million per year.

Chris Stephens: According to the gov.uk website, telephone calls to 0345 numbers can cost up to 55p a minute. Can the Minister confirm that that information is correct?

Damian Hinds: I have here the print-out of that page. It lists a number of different telephone number prefixes. Members will be aware that these days there are more telephone number prefixes than when we were growing up. The service on the Government website is to help people to understand what it means if they see an 03, an 0845, or an 07 number. It lists a range of costs for geographic numbers—the numbers we have for our homes; the 01 and 02 numbers—and a range for 03 numbers, which is the same as the range for the geographic numbers. That is what the tariff reflects. I am happy to confirm to the hon. Gentleman that we have been through that information today. There are a couple of minor points on the gov.uk information site that need to be updated, but they do not relate to any of the number prefixes that are in use at present by the DWP.

Chris Stephens: We will take that as a yes, so may I ask the Minister the following? He talked about a range of services and using different telephone lines and numbers for those services. Will he seriously consider setting up a free phone line for those who have received benefit late—for example, someone who should have had money on the Friday and who had to chase that up on the Monday?

Damian Hinds: Obviously, we want the system to be as accurate as possible. We want to reduce the requirement for people to be in touch with the Department for those reasons. When they have to, we want that to be done as quickly and as efficiently as possible. I have outlined the Department's policy. There is a range of 0800 numbers. The rest are 0345 numbers, which are equivalent to a normal, geographic land call. Typically, in a mobile phone contract or bundles on pay as you go, that would be included in the minutes that one has. We think that that is a fair and reasonable approach. There is still the option to request a call-back, too.

I want to come on to some of the other issues that the hon. Gentleman raised. He alluded to the fact that he and I have exchanged correspondence on the issue of third parties seeking to make a profit out of calls to the DWP. As he rightly mentioned, that can happen with other services, too. I would like to take the opportunity of this debate to update Members on that important issue.

I can confirm that my Department does not make any revenue out of calls to our publicised telephone numbers. We know that there is a small number of companies that seek to make money by providing an alternative, and usually more expensive, telephone number that then routes callers through to the Government helplines. Although that practice may be considered unethical, it is not illegal, provided the company does not pretend to be the Government and does not state that it is officially affiliated. The DWP is aware of a small number of sites that advertise that type of service, primarily owned by the same individual.

I strongly encourage internet search-engine providers actively to police and manage advertisers and subscribers who may look to profit from some vulnerable members of our society by advertising expensive or premium rate telephone lines as a route to access DWP services that are accessible directly through either freephone 0800 or local rate 0345 telephone numbers. The specific activity known as vishing, where a voicemail is left for the citizen to call back an unofficial number, is generally not widespread within the DWP—only one occurrence has been identified.

The DWP does everything it can to stop customers being caught out and, in that instance, the same number was identified as appearing as an “infobox” on a search engine for universal credit alongside the genuine UC number. The DWP complained to that search-engine provider and the incorrect entry was removed.

We have covered the question of the gov.uk tariff ranges. The hon. Gentleman also asked about steps being taken to improve access to, and people’s capability and confidence in using, IT equipment. As he will know from his visits to our jobcentres, we provide lobby equipment and encourage people to use it. There is often facility for people to bring their own device and be helped to use that, because we do absolutely see digital capability—digital empowerment—as being vital, not just in the claiming of benefits, but in applying for work, and, of course, when getting into work, as there are few jobs these days that do not require some level of IT literacy.

In conclusion, let me reassure hon. Members that the Department is absolutely committed to ensuring that costs for customers are kept to a minimum and that safeguards are in place for those who need them. The Department is in the process of transforming the way in which citizens interact with us, which I am sure hon. Members can appreciate will take us some time to deliver, given the range of services the Department delivers and the number of people we transact with every day. The hon. Gentleman asked about the Social Security Advisory Committee’s recommendation. These things are technology-dependent. The review of our systems is current and we are committed to looking at that closely.

Our telephony policy will be kept under review throughout this process and the Department will continue to seek to strike the right balance between the cost to citizens and the cost to the taxpayer.

Question put and agreed to.

10.26 pm

House adjourned.

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