

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT  
GENERAL COMMITTEES

Public Bill Committee

## PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES (AMENDMENT) BILL

*Twenty First Sitting*

*Wednesday 5 December 2018*

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Motion to adjourn considered.

Adjourned till Wednesday 12 December at Ten o'clock.

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**not later than**

**Sunday 9 December 2018**

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**The Committee consisted of the following Members:**

*Chairs:* † Ms NADINE DORRIES, ALBERT OWEN

Allan, Lucy (*Telford*) (Con)  
Bone, Mr Peter (*Wellingborough*) (Con)  
Charalambous, Bambos (*Enfield, Southgate*) (Lab)  
† Fletcher, Colleen (*Coventry North East*) (Lab)  
† Foster, Kevin (*Torbay*) (Con)  
Harper, Mr Mark (*Forest of Dean*) (Con)  
† Khan, Afzal (*Manchester, Gorton*) (Lab)  
† Lee, Karen (*Lincoln*) (Lab)  
† Linden, David (*Glasgow East*) (SNP)  
† Matheson, Christian (*City of Chester*) (Lab)

Mills, Nigel (*Amber Valley*) (Con)  
Norris, Alex (*Nottingham North*) (Lab/Co-op)  
Paisley, Ian (*North Antrim*) (DUP)  
† Smith, Chloe (*Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office*)  
Stewart, Bob (*Beckenham*) (Con)  
Wiggin, Bill (*North Herefordshire*) (Con)  
  
Adam Mellows-Facer, *Committee Clerk*  
  
† **attended the Committee**

## Public Bill Committee

Wednesday 5 December 2018

[Ms NADINE DORRIES *in the Chair*]

### Parliamentary Constituencies (Amendment) Bill

10 am

**The Chair:** I remind the Committee that electronic devices should be switched to silent mode. As we know—by now, I can say this without reading the notes—the Committee cannot consider the clauses of the Bill until the House has agreed to the money resolution.

**Afzal Khan** (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): I beg to move, That the Committee do now adjourn.

Once again, Ms Dorries, it is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship. This week has seen some unprecedented debates about parliamentary procedure, setting a collision course towards a constitutional crisis. At best, it is a dispute over the rights of Parliament versus the rights of the Government. These are the same issues that are at the heart of my private Member's Bill and the same issues of the Government stalling progress.

My Bill would protect the balance between paid-up Government Ministers and Back-Bench MPs by retaining 650 as the total number of MPs. That is what makes it so ironic that the Government are overreaching their Executive powers: by refusing to grant a money resolution, they are exactly proving my point. Perhaps the Minister will consider granting us all an early Christmas present by allowing the Bill to progress.

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): As ever, it is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I follow the hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton in saying that in a week when the House has passed a motion saying that Ministers in this Government have held Parliament in contempt, it sends a message about the sorry state we are in when Opposition day votes are not being adhered to and money resolutions are not coming forward for Bills that have been given a Second Reading in the House.

My only observation for the Committee this morning is about the feeling in this place. There is clearly a very volatile atmosphere, and it feels like the last days of a dying Government. The irony is that we will probably be going back to the electorate fairly soon for a general election, and it will be based on the old boundaries. There is a consensus in this House to look at the boundaries again, but not to reduce the seats from 650. We are in a very sorry state of affairs just now.

**Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab): What a great pleasure it is to serve under your chairmanship once again, Ms Dorries! That pleasure continues, even if the pleasure of turning up unproductively to this Committee week after week also continues. It is always good to see you in the Chair.

I must echo my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton and the hon. Member for Glasgow East. The Government are descending into a slough of obloquy and quite frankly things have every hallmark of chaos. Will the Minister do the Committee a favour and show a little of the respect that the Government have not shown to the House this week by giving us an update on the orders whose publication we have been waiting for? She told us a couple of months ago that the problem was that they were very complicated. Will she update us on any conversations that she or her officials have had with the parliamentary draftsman? Does she feel that we are any closer today to seeing those orders published so that we can test the will of the House?

I look forward to seeing you again next week or the week after, Ms Dorries.

**Karen Lee** (Lincoln) (Lab): I add to the comments of my fellow MPs. Yesterday, the Government were found to be in contempt of Parliament; I would say that having us come here week after week is a pretty contemptuous procedure as well, because there is a cost to Members' time and officers' time. It is pretty contemptuous of the taxpayer, who is ultimately paying the bill. I would like those comments noted for the record, please.

**The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Chloe Smith):** I can confirm that work continues on the order.

*Question put and agreed to.*

10.4 am

*Adjourned till Wednesday 12 December at Ten o'clock.*