

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT
GENERAL COMMITTEES

Public Bill Committee

PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES (AMENDMENT) BILL

Twenty Eighth Sitting

Wednesday 27 February 2019

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Motion to adjourn considered.

Adjourned till Wednesday 27 March at Ten o'clock.

No proofs can be supplied. Corrections that Members suggest for the final version of the report should be clearly marked in a copy of the report—not telephoned—and must be received in the Editor’s Room, House of Commons,

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Sunday 3 March 2019

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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 27 February 2019

[ALBERT OWEN *in the Chair*]

Parliamentary Constituencies (Amendment) Bill

10 am

The Chair: May I welcome you all back to our monthly gathering and remind you that electronic devices should be switched to silent? As the Committee cannot consider the clauses of the Bill until the House has agreed the money resolution, I call Afzal Khan to move that the Committee do now adjourn.

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

I, too, welcome Members back after a month's break. I do not know where all the Minister's Back Benchers are, but I am sure she can hold the fort.

This week has shown that the Prime Minister is insistent on recklessly running down the clock, in a desperate attempt to force MPs to choose between her deal and no deal. I cannot help but feel that the same irresponsible tactics are being deployed to prevent progress on this Bill. Although it is evident that delaying strategies are the favoured approach of the Government, that does not mean that they would solve any problems.

As I highlighted in our last sitting, the urgency of the Bill has not diminished. In fact, against the backdrop of Brexit, the need for the Bill should be even more apparent, so will the Minister enlighten us as to any developments?

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): As ever, it is an immense pleasure to see you in the Chair, Mr Owen, and to be back in this esteemed Public Bill Committee, which is making rapid progress through the legislative agenda—not. Having missed the Committee for a month, I have been reflecting on some of the other things that I have been able to do on a Wednesday morning. Of course, it has been a great sadness not to be here every Wednesday morning, which is why I am particularly pleased to be back.

I am incredibly busy today. I served on a Delegated Legislation Committee at 8.55 am, and now I am serving on this very heavy Committee. In all seriousness, this afternoon I am serving on the Committee considering the Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) (Amendment) Bill, which was brought forward by the right hon. Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers). I have been reflecting on how quickly we have managed to make progress on that Bill but not this one. Although I fully support the right hon. Lady in trying to take that

legislation through, it sticks in my craw somewhat that, in the course of one afternoon, we will consider that private Member's Bill, take it through its process and quite rightly ensure that it lands on the statute book, whereas the hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton is forced to come here—no longer weekly, but monthly—and sit through this complete charade.

That is symptomatic of what is happening in this place. Whether it is Brexit or this Bill, the Government are running down the clock until Parliament prorogues for a new Session, when, as we know, this Bill will unfortunately die. Of course, it is never too late. The Minister could go back to her Chief Whip and say, "We need to take this Bill through and ensure that the hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton gets it on the statute book." I think that is very unlikely, but I will still come here every month and make those points.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Chloe Smith): It is a great pleasure to see you again this morning, Mr Owen. I have missed the Committee's various interpretations of proceedings before today, but I can confirm, contrary to all such interpretations, that the order is in hand, as it was before, and that work proceeds to bring it back to Parliament as expected.

Afzal Khan: I am sad that, throughout this whole history, the Minister has been unable to enlighten us as to any progress. Even now, the word "progress" means nothing. Can the Minister give us some dates or a timescale?

David Linden *rose*—

The Chair: As we are not overcrowded, you may come in, Mr Linden.

David Linden: I am grateful to you for calling me, Mr Owen; I know that many hundreds of colleagues wish to contribute, so I will be brief. Perhaps the hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton and I can make our way to the Table Office after this sitting and table some named day questions to pin down the Minister specifically on how she and her civil servants are getting on with those Orders in Council. The hon. Gentleman is right that we should nail down those dates. I look forward to joining him in the Table Office once we have finished with the hundreds of other speeches that we are about to hear.

The Chair: Would Mr Khan like the last word?

Afzal Khan: I would be absolutely delighted to join my colleague in that endeavour.

Question put and agreed to.

10.4 am

Adjourned till Wednesday 27 March at Ten o'clock.