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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**
(HANSARD)

Wednesday 3 April 2019

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

The Secretary of State was asked—

Leaving the EU: Discussions with First Minister of Wales

1. **Tommy Sheppard** (Edinburgh East) (SNP): What recent discussions he has had with the First Minister of Wales on the withdrawal agreement and political declaration on the future relationship between the UK and the EU.

[910110]

2. **Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): What recent discussions he has had with the First Minister of Wales on the withdrawal agreement and political declaration on the future relationship between the UK and the EU.

[910111]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): I have regular discussions with the First Minister on the implications and opportunities for Wales arising from EU exit, including the withdrawal agreement and the political declaration.

Tommy Sheppard: Given the new easy listening approach of the Prime Minister, will the Government give a commitment that they will discuss any new proposals that they make on withdrawal from the European Union with the First Minister of Wales and the Welsh Government prior to the meeting of the European Council?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Gentleman is well aware that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is keen to work with colleagues across the House to secure a deal to leave the European Union in a smooth and orderly way. My relationship with the Welsh Government, and specifically with the First Minister in Wales, is warm, positive and constructive. As the hon. Gentleman will be well aware, the First Minister or someone that he nominates attends the European Union exit committee, which focuses on preparedness in the event of a no deal.

Patrick Grady: If it is good enough for this House to be asked repeatedly to approve the Prime Minister's deal, why is it not good enough to put it back to the people of Wales? If the Secretary of State is so confident in the merits of the Prime Minister's deal, why is he so afraid to put a deal that has been rejected by the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly back to the people of Wales to decide?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Gentleman seems to forget that Wales voted to leave the European Union. Also, I underline that Wales voted to leave the European Union in higher numbers than the average across the rest of the United Kingdom. Of course we are keen to work with all political parties to secure a smooth and efficient exit from the European Union. Let us be frank: the Welsh public and the UK public want to draw a line under this chapter.

Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con): Is not the key problem that we are facing with the withdrawal agreement at the moment that there are just too many MPs from Wales and elsewhere—on the Opposition Benches and some on our side—who go to their constituencies at the weekend and tell their leave voters that they want to get on with Brexit, but who then come back here on a Monday and find every trick in the book and every excuse to vote against implementing Brexit?

Alun Cairns: My right hon. Friend has absolutely hit the nail on the head and I am grateful for his support. He is well aware that, last Friday, the Opposition voted against the withdrawal agreement, having previously said that they had no differences with the withdrawal agreement. That seems to demonstrate that they are seeking to create as much chaos as they can, rather than acting in the national interest.

Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that, in discussing the withdrawal agreement with the Welsh First Minister, he has made clear the Government's position, which is to rule out participation in the customs union?

Alun Cairns: My right hon. Friend is well aware that this House has not yet come to a conclusion as to whether it wishes to call on the Government to be part of the customs union or not. So far everything has been rejected and the Prime Minister is seeking to work across the House, and with colleagues in all parties, to come to an agreement on what the House actually wants.

12. [910122] **Lloyd Russell-Moyle** (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): Does the Secretary of State believe that the Welsh economy will be stronger under the withdrawal agreement and the political declaration or weaker, and will he support a strong Welsh economy or a weaker Welsh economy?

Alun Cairns: With the actions that the Government are planning, I am optimistic about our prospects outside the European Union. Having travelled internationally—I was in Japan some weeks ago and in China at the end of last year—I am encouraged by the interest that has been shown in the UK economy, and I believe that Wales and the UK economy will be prosperous outside the European Union.

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): The Secretary of State told my colleague, the hon. Member for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr (Jonathan Edwards), on the record in the Welsh Affairs Committee two days ago that he did not want to be “in a situation where there is no deal.” Could the Secretary of State explain to Welsh food producers and manufacturers why there

are press reports after yesterday's Cabinet meeting that he was for a short delay? That is, of course, shorthand for supporting no deal.

Alun Cairns: The right hon. Lady is seeking to draw me on private discussions within Cabinet meetings, but of course she knows that I would not be drawn on those. What I said on the record on Monday I will happily say on the record now: I do not want to be in a no-deal position and that is the reason that I voted for a deal. I hope that the Welsh food producers that she referred to also supported the Prime Minister's deal, and I hope that she will explain to them why she refused to support it.

Liz Saville Roberts: To lose one Wales Office Minister may be regarded as a misfortune, but to lose four in little over a year looks like carelessness. Something must make their positions untenable, intolerable, dispensable, toxic. When will the Secretary of State admit that his office has also become dispensable and too toxic to serve the interests of Wales? When will he do the right thing and resign?

Alun Cairns: I do not think that a month passes without the right hon. Lady calling for me to take such action. However, it gives me an opportunity to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Selby and Ainsty (Nigel Adams) for his efforts, including his work on the north Wales growth deal, for which the right hon. Lady has shown appreciation in the past. I wish that she would not be so churlish now.

Christina Rees (Neath) (Lab/Co-op): As you know, Mr Speaker, the Newport West by-election will take place tomorrow, having been called after the sad passing of our wonderful colleague Paul Flynn. I wish Ruth Jones, our wonderful candidate, all the best for tomorrow. Let me also welcome the Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, the hon. Member for North Swindon (Justin Tomlinson), to his place. Is he staying long, or is he just passing through?

On several occasions the House has refused to back leaving without a deal. So have the Welsh Government and the Welsh Assembly. The Prime Minister does not want that either, and she has at last reached out to our party, seeking a cross-party approach to resolve the Brexit impasse. Does the Secretary of State agree with his Prime Minister, or with his former junior Minister, the hon. Member for Selby and Ainsty (Nigel Adams), who has just resigned?

Alun Cairns: Let me first wish Matthew Evans well in the by-election to which the hon. Lady has referred.

As I said a moment ago, I do not want to leave the European Union without a deal. That is exactly why I voted for the Prime Minister's deal. Perhaps the hon. Lady will explain to her constituents why she voted to block Brexit.

Christina Rees: I think it would be really helpful if the Secretary of State reiterated to the House today that he would rule out a no deal, which he knows would be disastrous for Wales. If he will not do so, he should follow his junior Minister and resign.

Alun Cairns: In the spirit in which the Prime Minister made her statement yesterday, when she said that she was keen to engage on an open and transparent basis, the Leader of the Opposition has said that there are no red lines, so I do not know why the hon. Lady is calling on me to draw some now.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

3. **Angela Crawley** (Lanark and Hamilton East) (SNP): What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the UK shared prosperity fund. [910112]

8. **Marion Fellows** (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the UK shared prosperity fund. [910118]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): I have regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues about a range of issues affecting Wales, including the UK shared prosperity fund. Leaving the European Union removes the geographical and fund-specific constraints that currently exist, and provides an opportunity to address the concerns of businesses, the voluntary sector and communities about excessive bureaucracy.

Angela Crawley: The Government committed themselves to creating a UK shared prosperity fund to replace EU funding that seeks to reduce inequalities across our communities between the four nations of the United Kingdom. Two years later, the fund still does not exist. Are the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Scotland advocating its introduction in the Cabinet, to ensure that Scotland and Wales secure the fairest deal and will not receive less funding than they currently receive, or than was promised by the leave campaign?

Alun Cairns: The simple fact is that the shared prosperity fund does not exist because we are still part of the European Union and receiving that EU funding. There is clearly plenty of space for development, and we will be consulting shortly. In respect of the share of funds received by Wales, I would compare my record positively with that of the Labour Administration. Having underfunded Wales for 13 years, we now have a new, enhanced settlement that is focused on need.

Marion Fellows: The worst inequality in any EU member state exists between London and Wales, and leaving the EU would make that worse. Can the Secretary of State confirm that he is working to ensure that the shared prosperity fund delivers for Wales—which can be done only if decisions are made in Wales—and that devolved Governments are not sidelined?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Lady raises an important point about the worst inequality, as she described it—that between London and Wales. The facts speak for themselves, but those inequalities have built up over some time. I would also point to the relative positive growth in Wales compared with other parts of the UK and the enhanced funding settlement that has been negotiated under the fiscal framework. So I am optimistic and excited about our future outside the EU.

David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the UK shared prosperity fund offers a cast-iron guarantee that Wales is not going

to lose out financially as a result of Brexit, and will he consider ensuring that that money goes directly to local authorities so it is spent in the best possible way?

Alun Cairns: My hon. Friend makes an extremely important point. Like me, he was an Assembly Member in 1999 when the first form of European aid on this scale was discussed. It was described as a once in a lifetime opportunity. Sadly, we have qualified twice since and that is because of the relative failure of the existing programmes.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): Further to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (David T. C. Davies), will my right hon. Friend ensure that it is local authorities that can bid for this scheme, rather than it just being devolved to the Welsh Assembly to divide up the funds accordingly?

Alun Cairns: My hon. Friend makes an important point and that is the sort of innovation that the consultation will consider. He is tempting me to draw conclusions before we actually consult, but we have not been doing nothing on this policy area. Pre-consultation discussions have already been taking place in Wales and the Welsh Government jointly presented at the last St Asaph meeting in north Wales.

10. [910120] **Gerald Jones** (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab): Wales has been a net beneficiary of EU structural funds and we were told we would not lose a penny when we leave the EU, so can we have certainty on the UK prosperity fund? When will the Secretary of State start to do his job, stand up for the people of Wales and make sure we do not lose out after we have left the EU?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point, but of course he is tempting me to announce elements of the comprehensive spending review well before my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will do so later this year. However, communities have said that the £4 billion has not changed communities in the way they wanted it to, so this is an opportunity to introduce a much more innovative, proactive approach that responds to the private and voluntary sectors and local authorities in a much more local way.

Chris Ruane (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): I welcome the hon. Member for North Swindon (Justin Tomlinson) to his new ministerial position. May I too wish our Labour candidate Ruth Jones well in the Newport West by-election tomorrow?

There has been more than just the one meeting on the shared prosperity fund in Wales—there have been five meetings—but the consultation has not started. MPs were neither informed nor invited to those meetings, even if, as was the case with me, they were held in their own constituency. Does the right hon. Gentleman view MPs from all sides as stakeholders in the shared prosperity fund? Why were MPs not invited to these meetings and will he meet with stakeholder MPs to discuss the design of the fund?

Alun Cairns: First, I point out that these meetings were aimed at communities and the Welsh Government jointly presented at the last one. The hon. Gentleman

has frequent opportunities to make direct representation here and it was only a little over a week ago that I met the all-party group for the UK shared prosperity fund to discuss the matter. I am sorry that he could not be present with some of his colleagues, but of course I will be happy to meet him or any other colleague who wishes to discuss the UK shared prosperity fund.

Foreign Direct Investment

4. **Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): What recent estimate he has made of the level of foreign direct investment into Wales. [910113]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): Last year, over 3,000 jobs came to Wales through foreign direct investment, through 57 projects, of which 93% were supported by my Department and the Department for International Trade.

Tom Pursglove: Given the recent showcasing of the Welsh investment portfolio at the MIPIM conference, what steps is the Secretary of State taking to try to lever further foreign direct investment into Wales, in what is undoubtedly a key nation in the global economy?

Alun Cairns: My hon. Friend is a strong advocate for foreign direct investment in his constituency and in all parts. He rightly points out that the Department for International Trade promoted a Wales capital investment programme at the MIPIM conference for the first time. That is a great demonstration of Whitehall Departments working closely with local authorities. There has been extremely positive feedback from both local authorities and investors, and we are working through those leads to see which projects can land.

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab): Not only would no deal have an impact on foreign direct investment; it would also, on the Government's own figures, leave the Welsh economy 8% smaller over 15 years. Can the Secretary of State clear up any ambiguity about his own attitude to no deal and say clearly today that there are no circumstances whatever in which he would back no deal?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Gentleman is quite selective in the quotes that he cites on foreign direct investment. He and the House will be well aware that the latest available figures show that the UK has the third highest stock of foreign direct investment in the world after the US and Hong Kong. Clearly, the UK's record on FDI is strong, and I suggest that Wales's record is stronger than most of the rest of the UK.

Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend ensure that every single UK trade delegation overseas sings the song loudly and proudly that Wales is, and will continue to be, open for business?

Alun Cairns: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his question. He is rightly aware of the great record that Wales has on attracting inward investment. There are more than 60 Japanese companies in Wales, for example, and that is why I was there some weeks ago talking not

only about existing investments but about the potential for new investments for the UK outside the European Union.

Ben Lake (Ceredigion) (PC): The Secretary of State will be aware that the Irish Government have recently reopened their consulate in Cardiff. What more can the Government do to encourage other countries to do likewise, so as to boost Wales's international presence and levels of inward investment?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point, which we discussed at the Welsh Affairs Committee on Monday. I pay tribute to him for his persistence on this matter. He rightly points out that the Irish Government have opened an office in Cardiff, and we would encourage other Governments to do that. I am happy to meet and to work with him to see which nations we should target to attract them to Wales and to Cardiff.

Infrastructure Resilience

5. **Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the resilience of infrastructure in Wales. [910114]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): I have regular discussions with the Welsh Government's Minister for Economy and Transport on a range of matters, including infrastructure in Wales. We are committed to creating a broad-based resilient economy through our own modern industrial strategy and the Welsh Government's economic action plan.

Christian Matheson: The resilience of the major road network in north-east Wales is entirely dependent on the M56, just across the border in my constituency, which is now beyond capacity. Will the Secretary of State speak to Department for Transport Ministers to ensure that we get the upgrades we need in order to benefit north-east Wales as well?

Alun Cairns: The hon. Gentleman raises an important point, particularly when responsibilities are split between the Welsh Government and the UK Government. In seeking to address these sorts of issues, and cross-border infrastructure projects in particular, the strategic roads in Britain group has been established—of which the Welsh Government and the UK Government are part—to prioritise how we can best resolve these issues.

9. [910119] **Ann Clwyd** (Cynon Valley) (Lab): The Chancellor said last week that there was not one extra penny for the environment in Wales. Who is going to clean up the 100 acres of polluted land in Abercwmboi unless the Government do it?

Alun Cairns: I pay tribute to the right hon. Lady for her work on seeking to clear up the phurnacite site. She has been working on this project for many years. I would perhaps enhance the comment she made about funding for Wales for environmental projects, because that is devolved and would be part of the Barnett block. I am keen to work with her to see how we can best influence the Welsh Government in this devolved area of policy so that we can bring benefit to her constituency.

Prince of Wales's Investiture Regalia: Permanent Home

6. **Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on a permanent home for the display of the Prince of Wales's investiture regalia in Wales; and if he will make a statement. [910116]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): I commend my hon. Friend for his commitment to this issue. I would be delighted to see the return of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales's regalia to Wales. There are many fine residences in Wales that would be suitable to display what some consider to be the Welsh Crown jewels.

Michael Fabricant: As you will know, Mr Speaker, the question on Welsh people's lips at the moment is not Brexit but the royal regalia. Does my right hon. Friend not agree that there are many suitable locations, including Caernarfon castle or, perhaps even better, the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, which has a secure place to store them?

Alun Cairns: My hon. Friend is persistent, but that demonstrates the importance of the project and its potential to attract tourists to Wales. It is an interesting proposal, and my officials are happy to work with other organisations to see how we can make it a reality. There are security implications, but there are also significant potential benefits.

Susan Elan Jones (Clwyd South) (Lab): Investiture regalia is probably a controversial subject, but those who are keen on it would describe themselves as patriots. Will the Secretary of State for Wales describe himself as a real patriot by ruling out a disastrous no-deal Brexit, and will he show his commitment to that?

Alun Cairns: I am a passionate Welsh patriot, as I would hope that the hon. Lady would recognise. I want to leave the European Union with a deal, which is why I have voted for it, but I point to the hon. Lady's record: she voted against the deal last Friday, rejecting the call, instruction and demand that came from the Welsh public in the referendum.

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): The Royal Collection contains a fantastically valuable sword made of Tain silver. Will the Secretary of State have a word with the Secretary of State for Scotland to see whether the sword could be lent to my home town of Tain in the highlands?

Alun Cairns: I will happily raise the matter with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. This question highlights the great history, shared identity and common issues of this nation, and we can share such assets to attract tourists to every part of the United Kingdom.

Industrial Strategy

7. **Jessica Morden** (Newport East) (Lab): What discussions he has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) the Welsh Government on the effect of the industrial strategy on the Welsh economy. [910117]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Alun Cairns): I have been working closely with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy and with the Welsh Government to ensure that Wales benefits from the opportunities that our modern industrial strategy provides.

Jessica Morden: The recent BEIS Committee report on the industrial strategy was particularly damning about how the steel sector has been failed by the Government. If Ruth Jones is elected tomorrow, she will be strong voice for the industry in Newport West, but what is the Secretary of State doing to push the sector deal negotiations and demand action on energy costs?

Alun Cairns: I do not recognise the hon. Lady's point, but she is a strong supporter of the steel industry in her constituency, across Wales and elsewhere. The steel industry faced a challenging crisis just three years ago, and it is now in a much more positive position as a result of Government interventions such as reducing energy costs for energy-intensive industries.

Albert Owen (Ynys Môn) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy for meeting a delegation that I brought here a few months ago, but we now need action. Rehau is shedding jobs in my constituency, and this is an opportunity for the Department to put its money where its mouth is with the industrial strategy and help that company. Will the Secretary of State meet me to follow up on the meeting that the former Under-Secretary of State had with the company so that we can keep jobs and production in Amwlch in my constituency?

Alun Cairns: I am happy to respond positively to the hon. Gentleman, who is a champion for Anglesey. Since our meeting about Wylfa Newydd, I met the chairman of Hitachi to press the importance of the case and to stress the support that comes from the local authority, the Assembly Member and the Member of Parliament, which demonstrates the co-ordinated approach.

Universal Credit: Low-income Families

11. **Ruth George (High Peak) (Lab):** What recent assessment he has made of the effect of the roll-out of universal credit on low-income families in Wales. [910121]

13. **Marsha De Cordova (Battersea) (Lab):** What recent assessment he has made of the effect of the roll-out of universal credit on low-income families in Wales. [910123]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Justin Tomlinson): Universal credit is available in every jobcentre in Wales. Our welfare reforms are incentivising work and supporting working families. In the past 12 months alone, the employment rate in Wales has increased by 3.4 percentage points, the largest increase in any area of the UK.

Ruth George: Considering that pensioner poverty is higher in Wales than in any other country of the United Kingdom, what assessment has the Minister made of the change in the rules for mixed-age couples, who will lose up to £7,000 in pension credit?

Justin Tomlinson: It is not right that those of working age should be accessing pensioner benefits, but this Government have delivered the triple-lock pension support, which has given pensioners an extra £1,600 a year.

Marsha De Cordova: Will the Minister set out what discussions he is having with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on making it easier for private-rented sector tenants in Wales to have the housing element of universal credit paid directly to their private landlord?

Justin Tomlinson: I can confirm that I have regular discussions with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on this subject, about which she is incredibly passionate. We are making it easier, particularly for those on legacy benefits who already have direct payments.

Chris Evans (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op): Has the Minister received an assurance from the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions that the social security freeze will not continue after 2020?

Justin Tomlinson: I can confirm that that is the default position. It was a four-year position, and this is the final year. We will continue to share the benefits of strong economic growth with the most vulnerable in society.

PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister was asked—

Engagements

Q1. [910195] **Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab):** If she will list her official engagements for Wednesday 3 April.

The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May): April marks 50 years since the launch of our longest sustained military operation, Operation Relentless, and the beginning of our continuous at sea deterrent. I am sure all Members on both sides of the House will want to join me in paying tribute to all the generations of Royal Navy submariners, their families, who sacrifice so much, and all those involved in protecting our nation.

Tomorrow marks 70 years since the founding of NATO. I assure the House that, under this Government, the United Kingdom will continue to play our leading role in NATO as it continues its mission of keeping nearly 1 billion people safe.

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

Mr Cunningham: I assure the Prime Minister that I will not raise Brexit, which will be raised later. I want to raise another very important issue. Consultants and doctors at the university hospital in my constituency have raised the issue of the NHS pension scheme and the tapered annual allowance, the consequences of which are that doctors are retiring early and turning down additional shifts for fear of paying higher tax bills to the Government. That is resulting in longer waiting times for patients and a shortage of doctors and consultants. Will she raise this with the Chancellor as soon as possible and inform me of his answer?

The Prime Minister: I am aware of the issue that the hon. Gentleman raises. In fact, the Chancellor and the Treasury are already in discussion with the Department of Health and Social Care on this very issue. The hon. Gentleman will have noticed that the Chancellor is on the Treasury Bench and has heard his point. I will make sure that we confirm to him what comes out of those discussions.

Q7. [910201] Sir David Amess (Southend West) (Con): With party loyalties being severely tested, is my right hon. Friend aware that, as the country and the world ponder whether Brexit means Brexit and whether we will make a success of it, Southend-on-Sea has been welcoming ambassadors from all over the world to work in partnership and on investment, looking at our pier and building a new marina? Will she consider bringing forward a meaningful vote, for which I believe there is a majority in the House, that Southend-on-Sea be declared a city?

The Prime Minister: I should just congratulate my hon. Friend on so cleverly working in Southend's claim to become a city. As he says, it is very important that we see that investment coming to our country. The benefits and opportunities, when we have got over this stage and delivered Brexit, for building that better Britain and building that better future, including in Southend-on-Sea, will be there. It is for all of us to ensure that we can get over this stage, get a deal through, get to Brexit, deliver on Brexit and build that better future, of which I am sure Southend will be a leading part.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): I join the Prime Minister in wishing the people of Southend well, and I hope it does become a city. [*Interruption.*] Is that okay?

I welcome the Prime Minister's offer of talks following the meetings I have held with Members across the House, and I look forward to meeting her later today. I welcome her willingness to compromise to resolve the Brexit deadlock.

When the Prime Minister began her premiership, she promised to resolve the burning injustices facing this country, so can she explain why, according to the Government's own official figures, poverty has risen for all ages under her Administration?

The Prime Minister: No one in government wants to see poverty rising, and we take this very seriously indeed, but, as I have said previously to the right hon. Gentleman, the only sustainable way to tackle poverty is with a strong economy and a welfare system that helps people into work. That is why it is important that we have the lowest unemployment since the 1970s and that the number of homes where no one works is at a record low. But we also need to make sure that work pays. Let me just give the right hon. Gentleman some figures: in 2010, under a Labour Government, someone working full-time on the national minimum wage would have taken home £9,200 after tax and national insurance, whereas now, thanks to our tax cuts and the biggest increase in the national living wage, they will take home more than £13,700—that is £4,500 more under a Conservative Government.

Jeremy Corbyn: Official figures show that since 2010 child poverty has increased by half a million, working age poverty has increased by 200,000 and pensioner poverty has increased by 400,000. Although the Prime Minister is right to mention the national minimum wage, whose introduction her party strongly opposed, we should just be aware of what the national minimum wage actually means: it is £8.21 for over-25s; for 21 to 24-year-olds it is only £7.70; and for apprentices it is just £3.90 an hour. These are poverty wages. There are now 8 million people in this country in work and in poverty. Many on middle incomes are struggling to make ends meet. Universal credit is failing. Will the Prime Minister today at least halt the roll-out of universal credit and agree to a thorough review of it?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, as we have been rolling out universal credit, we have been making changes to it. One of the early measures we took when I became Prime Minister was to change the taper rate. We have since abolished the seven-day wait. We have ensured that we have taken action to make it easier for those who are transferring on to UC in relation to their housing benefit. But, crucially, there is only one way to ensure that we sustainably deal with the issue of poverty—

Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op)
A Labour Government.

The Prime Minister: No, and I will come on to that. It is to ensure that we have a strong economy that delivers jobs, and better jobs, and that people can keep more of the money that they earn. What do we know would happen? From behind the right hon. Gentleman, an hon. Member says, from a sedentary position, that the answer is a Labour Government. But a Labour Government would spend £1,000 billion more than has been proposed; a Labour Government would put up taxes; and the Labour party has opposed tax cut after tax cut. This is how you help working people: tax cuts which keep people in work; better jobs; and high employment. That is under the Conservatives.

Jeremy Corbyn: From a Government that rolled out austerity and has caused such poverty across the country, the Prime Minister really ought to think for a moment about what she has just said. The last Labour Government halved child poverty; brought in children's centres and Sure Start; and reduced poverty across the whole country. She seems to be ignoring the true impact of universal credit. The Trussell Trust says that in areas where universal credit has been rolled out, food bank use has increased by more than 50%. This week, we also learned that another 400,000 pensioners are in poverty compared with 2010. So why is the Prime Minister pressing ahead with cuts to pension credit for couples where one person is of pension age and the other is not?

The Prime Minister: Under a Conservative Government we have seen the triple lock on pensions, which has provided good increases for pensioners year after year, and under this Conservative Government we have seen the introduction of the new pension arrangements for individuals who are pensioners. Let us just remember what we saw under a Labour Government. It is not under a Conservative Government that we saw a 75p rise in pensions—it was under Labour.

Jeremy Corbyn: The last Labour Government lifted 2 million pensioners out of poverty; this Government have put 400,000 more into poverty. Age UK, which I think knows a thing or two about this, says that this proposal by the Government is “a substantial stealth cut”. This year, 15,000 pensioner households could be up to £7,000 a year worse off as a result of this stealth cut.

I am pleased that the Prime Minister mentioned the triple lock, because at the last general election the Government alarmed older people by pledging to scrap the triple lock and the means-tested winter fuel allowance. Will the Prime Minister give an unequivocal commitment that this is no longer Government policy and will not be in the next Tory manifesto?

The Prime Minister: We have given our commitments to pensioners. We are clear: we are keeping those commitments to pensioners. What we have seen under Conservatives in government is the basic state pension rise by over £1,450 a year. That is in direct contrast to what a Labour Government did for our pensioners. We want people to be able to live in dignity in their old age, and that is what this Conservative Government are delivering.

Jeremy Corbyn: I am sure that the whole generation of WASPI women will be pretty alarmed at the lack of action by this Government and the lack of justice for them. Additionally, over 1 million over-75s currently receive a free TV licence, a scheme established by the last Labour Government. This Government transferred the scheme to the BBC without guaranteeing its funding. Will the Government take responsibility and guarantee free TV licences for the over-75s?

The Prime Minister: We have been clear what we want the BBC to do and, frankly, I think that the BBC is in a position to be able to do that with the income that it receives.

Jeremy Corbyn: The last Labour Government guaranteed free TV licences for the over-75s; this Government appear to be outsourcing that policy to the BBC. I think it should be an item of public policy and not be left to somebody else to administer on behalf of the Government.

The last Labour Government lifted 2 million pensioners out of poverty and 2 million children out of absolute poverty, and homelessness was cut in half. Contrast that with this Government, who have put half a million more children and 400,000 more pensioners into poverty, and doubled homelessness. This, by this Government, is a political choice. There is nothing inevitable about rising poverty, homelessness and soaring food-bank use in the fifth richest country on earth. So yes, let us work to try to resolve the Brexit deadlock, but unless this Government tackle insecure work, low pay and rising pensioner poverty, the Prime Minister's Government will be marked down for what they are—a failure in the eyes of the people of this country.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman cited the last Labour Government—I did not realise that he was such a fan of the last Labour Government. He seemed to spend the entire time voting against them when he had a Labour Government.

Let us just talk about what is happening under this Government: a record rate of employment; wages growing at their fastest for a decade; debt falling; a long-term plan for the NHS, and the biggest cash boost in the NHS's history; a skills-based immigration system; more money for police, local councils and schools; the biggest upgrade in workers' rights for over 20 years; the freeing of councils to build more homes; world-class public services—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. Mr Russell-Moyle, you are behaving in a truly delinquent fashion. Calm yourself, young man. I had to have words with you yesterday. You are a bit over-eager. It is not the sort of thing that I would ever have done as a Back Bencher.

The Prime Minister: World-class public services; better jobs; more homes; and a stronger economy—Conservatives delivering on the things that matter.

Dame Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): As this week is World Autism Awareness Week, may I ask my right hon. Friend to encourage all Departments to follow the examples being set by the Ministry of Justice, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Health and Social Care, which are taking initiatives to improve their engagement with people who have autism in their families? I also ask her to endorse the autism awareness training course for Members of Parliament—offered through the all-party parliamentary group on autism and the National Autistic Society—which will be held in this House on 1 May. As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Autism Act 2009, it would be good to see every MP go through that training course to better help their constituents.

The Prime Minister: I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend for the work that she did to bring in the Autism Act 2009. It was very important; it was groundbreaking. It was the first piece of parliamentary legislation to be linked to the condition of autism. I thank her and the members of the all-party parliamentary group on autism for their work on this important issue, including in highlighting the awareness week, and in ensuring that autism training is available for Members of Parliament. I hope, as she does, that Members from across the House take that up. We are reviewing our autism strategy to ensure that it remains fit for purpose, because we want to know what is working and where we need to push harder to transform our approach, so we will continue to look at the issue, which she rightly highlighted in her work on the Act. I welcome that, and congratulate her on the work that she continues to do on the issue.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): It is well known that the SNP supports a people's vote and has supported revocation, but all the way through this process, right back to 2016, the SNP and the Scottish Government have sought compromise. We have published document after document, including “Scotland's Place in Europe”, which we know Michel Barnier has read; he says it is an interesting document. Why does the Prime Minister continue to ignore Scotland's voices? Why has she restricted herself to inviting the Leader of the Opposition to formal talks? Why has she not invited the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government? Why is it that Scotland's voices are being ignored by this Prime Minister and this Government?

The Prime Minister: I am meeting the First Minister of Scotland later today, and we will be talking to her about Scotland. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman asked a question, and the Prime Minister is answering it. Let us hear, fully and courteously, the answer.

The Prime Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I say, I am meeting the First Minister of Scotland, and the First Minister of Wales, later today. The right hon. Gentleman asks why I offered to meet the Leader of the Opposition. I am happy to meet Members from across the House to discuss the Brexit issue, but I think I am right in saying that the Leader of the Opposition and I both want to ensure that we leave the European Union with a deal, whereas of course the right hon. Gentleman, as he has just said, has a policy of revoking article 50. That means not leaving the European Union at all.

Ian Blackford: I asked about formal talks. I am well aware that my friend and colleague is meeting the Prime Minister this afternoon. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Members are becoming very over-excited. The right hon. Gentleman has a right to be heard, and he will be heard.

Ian Blackford: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Let me make it clear that the voices of Scotland will not be shouted down by Conservatives in this House. The important factor here is that the Prime Minister is having formal talks with the Leader of the Opposition. Scotland will not accept a Tory or a Labour Brexit. Scotland voted to remain in the European Union, and we simply will not be dragged out against our will. Will the Prime Minister now engage in formal talks with the Scottish Government, the Scottish National party and other Opposition parties to make sure that our voices are heard, and that the desire to stay in the European Union—the best deal for all of us—is listened to and respected?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, because we have met to talk about these issues, just as I have met other party leaders from across the House, I am always happy to meet party leaders from across the House. I want to find a way forward that delivers on the referendum and delivers Brexit as soon as possible, but in a way that means that we do not have to fight the European parliamentary elections, and in an orderly way for this country. He talks about voices from Scotland; I can assure him that there are indeed strong voices for Scotland in this House—they sit on the Conservative Benches.

Nigel Adams (Selby and Ainsty) (Con): Can I urge my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, on behalf of all the people of Selby, to put her weight behind the campaign for step-free access for Selby railway station? *[Interruption.]* I am sorry to disappoint colleagues with my line of questioning, but this matter is very important for the people of Selby. In this day and age, it is totally unacceptable that those who are unable to walk up stairs—people with disabilities—are denied access to public transport. The people of Selby demand action.

The Prime Minister: First, I thank my hon. Friend for his service as a Government Minister since 2017. He has worked extremely hard, serving as both a Wales Office Minister and a Government Whip simultaneously, and I am sorry that he has resigned. I also thank him for raising the important issue of access to public transport, particularly access to stations for people with disabilities. He asked me to add my weight to the campaign, but I have to say that his considerable weight has been behind the campaign for a long time. *[Laughter.]* As a campaigner!

Mr Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister was referring to the hon. Gentleman's qualities as a campaigner. That is what she was saying. She was not looking at the hon. Gentleman when she made that remark; she was saying it on the basis of her knowledge of him.

The Prime Minister: As I said, my hon. Friend has been campaigning hard on the issue for some time. I understand that the Department for Transport will announce tomorrow the stations that will benefit from funding for accessibility, if my hon. Friend can have just a little patience and wait for the announcement.

Q2. [910196] Owen Smith (Pontypridd) (Lab): When the Prime Minister sits down later this afternoon with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Brexit Secretary, no doubt she will hear that Labour's policy on Brexit is to secure membership of a customs union and the single market, and—crucially—to get a people's vote on any deal. If the Prime Minister accepts that compromise, she can pass her deal and leave office. Will she do so?

The Prime Minister: The purpose of meeting the Leader of the Opposition today is to look at the areas on which we agree. There are actually a number of areas on which we agree in relation to Brexit: we both want to deliver on leaving the EU with a deal; we both want to protect jobs; we both want to ensure that we end free movement; and we both recognise the importance of the withdrawal agreement. We want to find a way forward that can command the support of this House, to deliver on Brexit and the result of the referendum, and to ensure that people can continue to have trust in their politicians doing what they ask us to do.

Suella Braverman (Fareham) (Con): Robert Small and David West were two young men from the Fareham area with their whole lives ahead of them. While suffering with mental health problems and under the care of Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust, they tragically took their own lives. Few can imagine the grief endured by their families, who have since been campaigning for a change at Southern Health, which has struggled with systemic issues and problems for some years. Will my right hon. Friend reassure me that the Government will work with me and other Hampshire MPs to secure vital changes at Southern Health so that such tragedies may be avoided?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for raising this important issue. I extend my deepest sympathies to the families and friends of the constituents she referred to. These incidents are very concerning. I understand that the local trust and the county council have pledged to work together more closely to resolve

issues, but we remain absolutely committed to transforming mental health services around the country. We are providing record investment for these services, and we have an ambitious plan to increase the workforce and deal with the issues. I reassure my hon. Friend that action will be taken to ensure that we can prevent such incidents from happening in the future. They were terrible incidents, and our sympathies are with the family and friends of the victims.

Q3. [910197] Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): This afternoon there will be a reception in Parliament to honour the 51 Muslims killed in Christchurch. In the wake of that horrific terror attack, mosques were targeted in Birmingham and Newcastle. There is a global rise in Islamophobia, including in the ranks of the Tory party. In an article for *The Times* this week, their party chairman could not even utter the word “Islamophobia”. How can they deal with a problem they cannot even name? I ask the Prime Minister, for the third time, when will the Conservative party conduct an inquiry and adopt the all-party parliamentary group on British Muslims definition of Islamophobia?

The Prime Minister: As I believe I have said to the hon. Gentleman before, when any allegations of Islamophobia are made, against elected Conservatives or members of the Conservative party, we take them very seriously and action is taken in relation to those individuals. He referred to the attacks on mosques. I absolutely condemn any attacks against mosques, or indeed against any place of worship. I am pleased to say that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has increased the funding available to help protect places of worship against attacks. This has no place in our society and we should all be working to ensure that people can go to their place of worship and feel safe and secure in this country.

Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con): Does it remain the Prime Minister’s position that the Leader of the Opposition is not fit to govern?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I think my right hon. Friend will know, having heard my remarks about what I think a Labour Government would do to the economy, that I do not think the Labour party should be in government. It is the Conservatives who are delivering for people. The Leader of the Opposition and I have different opinions on a number of issues, and I will highlight just one. When this country suffered a chemical weapons attack on the streets of Salisbury, it was this Government, with me as Prime Minister, who stood up to the perpetrators. The right hon. Gentleman said that he preferred to believe Vladimir Putin than our own security agencies. That is not the position of someone who should be Prime Minister.

Q4. [910198] Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): The British Government are in meltdown, Westminster is completely dysfunctional, and this morning the Wales Office lost its fourth Minister in a year. Who could possibly say that Westminster is working for Wales?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman should look at the funding that has been made available to Wales by this Westminster Government. He talks about

the Government of Wales. There are indeed issues there that I think we should be focusing on, such as the national health service in Wales under a Labour Government. *[Interruption.]* Yes, Members may well point. That is what we see when Labour is in office: a national health service that has not met its A&E target for over a decade.

Dr Phillip Lee (Bracknell) (Con): According to polling that has just been published, over 58% of the British public have expressed a wish to have a final say on the Brexit process. Does the Prime Minister acknowledge that, with the ongoing impasse here in Westminster, and despite her best endeavours to pass her deal, and indeed the ongoing endeavours of the House to find a compromise, the British public are right increasingly to think that they should have a final say before proceeding with Brexit?

The Prime Minister: I know how passionately my hon. Friend has campaigned on this issue for some time now. He refers to the deal that the Government have put forward being rejected. Of course, the Leader of the Opposition’s deal has also been rejected by this House, as has a second referendum. What I believe we should be doing is delivering on the result of the first referendum, which is why I will be sitting down with the Leader of the Opposition later today.

Q5. [910199] Preet Kaur Gill (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab/Co-op): My constituent Georgia Stokes has two children with autism who have been unable to get the support they need and are therefore not at school because of incorrect diagnoses. Every child with autism is unique, which is why awareness raising and education about autism is vital. Some 34% of children on the autism spectrum say that the worst thing about being at school is being picked on. This World Autism Awareness Week, will the Prime Minister commit to speeding up the time between referral for autism and diagnosis, and will she promise to fund mandatory training for healthcare professionals so that parents such as Georgia are not left to fend for themselves?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady again raises the important issue of autism. I am sure that, as constituency MPs, we all see cases where parents have found it very difficult to get support for their children who are on the autistic spectrum. It is important to ensure that there is the awareness and the ability to deal with this issue. As I said in response to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Dame Cheryl Gillan), we are looking again at our autism strategy, because we want to ensure that we have in place all we need to support those with autism.

Lee Rowley (North East Derbyshire) (Con): Last week in this Chamber, the Prime Minister said that the Leader of the Opposition is

“The biggest threat to our standing in the world, to our defence and to our economy”—*[Official Report, 27 March 2019; Vol. 657, c. 313.]*

In her judgment, what now qualifies him for involvement in Brexit?

The Prime Minister: Every Member of this House is involved in Brexit. I want to deliver Brexit. I want to deliver Brexit in an orderly way. I want to do it as soon

as possible. I want to do it without us having to fight European parliamentary elections. To do that, we need to get an agreement through this House on the withdrawal agreement and a deal. The House has rejected every proposal that has gone before it so far, as well as a second referendum and revoking article 50. I believe that the public want us to work across the House to find a solution that delivers Brexit, delivers on the referendum and gives people faith that politicians have done what they asked and actually delivered for them.

Q6. [910200] Stewart Hosie (Dundee East) (SNP): After two years of Brexit deadlock, intransigence and a seven-hour Cabinet meeting, the best the Prime Minister can do is invite the leader of the British Labour party to become the co-owner of her Brexit failure. Let me ask her: had she been the Leader of the Opposition and been invited into a trap like that, would she have been foolish enough to accept?

The Prime Minister: Across this House, we all have a responsibility to ensure that we deliver Brexit and that we do it as soon as possible and in an orderly way. It is entirely right, and I think members of the public expect it, for us to reach out across the House to find a way through; they want a solution. The country needs a solution, and the country deserves a solution, and that is what I am working to find.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): In the past fortnight there have been two incidents involving knife crime in my city of Chelmsford, and my constituents are extremely concerned. Can my right hon. Friend give us an update on this week's knife crime summit?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend raises a very important issue. Our thoughts are with the family and friends of her constituents. It was a very important summit that we held on Monday. I was pleased to bring together people from the police, across Government Departments, community groups, the judiciary, healthcare and a wide range of activities to recognise the importance of taking a holistic, collective approach to dealing with knife crime. We will be consulting on a statutory duty to deal with knife crime as a public health issue, which is important, to ensure that everybody plays their part.

After the summit I was able to meet a number of families who had lost children—I say children, because these were teenagers—as a result of serious violence involving knife crime and a shooting. The horror and devastation of these attacks is brought home when sitting down and listening to the families who have seen promising young lives cut short in this tragic way. We are committed as a Government to working not just across Government but with society as a whole to deal with the scourge of serious violence, which is taking so many young lives.

Q8. [910202] Luke Pollard (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op): Back in June last year, I asked the Prime Minister to help fund the recycling of the 20 old nuclear submarines tied up and rotting in Devonport and Rosyth. Today's National Audit Office report shows that the Ministry of Defence has no funded plan to do this work, and no submarines have been dismantled since 1980—that is the year I was born. Will the Prime Minister now extend the civil

nuclear clean-up to make sure that it includes all the Royal Navy submarines, so that we can deal with this issue, and make that part of her legacy in office?

The Prime Minister: We remain committed to the safe, secure and cost-effective defuelling and dismantling of our nuclear submarines as soon as is practically possible. The MOD continues to act as a responsible nuclear operator by maintaining its decommissioned nuclear submarines to meet the necessary safety and security standards. I think its commitment is illustrated by the recent success in the initial dismantling of the submarine *Swiftsure*, which has been followed immediately by the initial dismantling of *Resolution*. The MOD will continue to work with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority to achieve steady-state disposal of our laid-up submarines as soon as possible. We are working on this. The Labour Government had 13 years as well, and what work did they do during those 13 years on this decommissioning issue?

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): Why is a Conservative Prime Minister, who repeatedly told us that no deal is better than a bad deal, now approaching Labour MPs to block a WTO Brexit when most Conservative MPs want us to leave the European Union with a clean break in nine days' time?

The Prime Minister: I say to my right hon. Friend that I was absolutely right: no deal is better than a bad deal, but we have got a good deal. We had a chance last Friday to ensure that we would leave the European Union on 22 May, and I am grateful to all colleagues who supported that motion, some of whom, I know, doing so with a very heavy heart. But I want to ensure that we deliver Brexit. I want to ensure that we do it in an orderly way, as soon as possible, without fighting European elections, but to do that we need to find a way of this House agreeing the withdrawal agreement and agreeing the way forward. It is on that basis that I have been sitting down with Members across the House and will continue to do so in order to ensure that we can find a way forward that this House can support.

Q9. [910203] Martin Whitfield (East Lothian) (Lab): Grace Warnock is a young East Lothian constituent of mine who has Crohn's disease. Using accessible toilets, she has faced negative comments and abuse from adults, but this has inspired her to create Grace's sign to remind everyone that there are people with invisible disabilities, who have every right to use accessible toilet facilities, and that society should have a heart. Will the Prime Minister join me in endorsing Grace's campaign to standardise toilet signage to ensure that anyone—anybody—with a disability feels able to use accessible toilets without abuse?

The Prime Minister: I commend Grace for the work that she has been doing on this issue—sadly, coming out of her own personal experience. I think the hon. Gentleman has raised a very important issue. We want to make sure that people with invisible disabilities are able to access public toilets and can do so in a way that does not lead to the abuse that, sadly, Grace suffered. I fully recognise the campaign that she is fighting, and I think it is an excellent campaign.

Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): The people of Sleaford and North Hykeham—like myself, like the country—voted for Brexit and want to see it delivered. I understand the Prime Minister's saying that we have to look at the balance of risk. Indeed, I looked at the balance of risk myself and supported her deal, and I urge others in our party to do so. But if it comes to the point when we have to balance the risk of a no-deal Brexit versus the risk of letting down the country and ushering in a Marxist, antisemite-led Government, what does she think at that point is the lowest risk?

The Prime Minister: First, I thank my hon. Friend for the support she has shown for the Government's deal and for the encouragement she is giving to others to support that deal. I want to see that we are able to deliver for her constituents and for others across the country and that we, as I say, deliver Brexit, and do it as soon as possible. In delivering Brexit, we need to ensure that we are delivering on the result of the referendum. That is what I said yesterday, and that is what we will be looking to do.

Q10. [910204] **Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): The Prime Minister stated last night that she will meet the Leader of the Opposition. Can she indicate for the benefit of my party, the Democratic Unionist party, but also for all Members of this House, which of the Leader of the Opposition's Brexit policies she thinks she could accept?

The Prime Minister: I am going to be in discussion with the Leader of the Opposition, but as I indicated earlier, I think the Leader of the Opposition and I both want to deliver leaving the EU and to deliver that with a deal. I think we both agree that the withdrawal agreement is a part of any deal. I think we both agree that we want to protect jobs and ensure high standards of workers' rights. I think there are a number of areas on which we agree; the question is, can we come to an agreement that we can both support that would command the support of this House? That is what the talks will be about.

Sir Henry Bellingham (North West Norfolk) (Con): Seventy years after the founding of NATO, will the Prime Minister find time today to look at the situation facing Northern Ireland veterans, some of whom are being arrested and charged with murder, nearly 50 years after the alleged events and where there is no new evidence? What signal does that send to youngsters looking to join the armed forces? Will she try to make solving this part of her legacy?

The Prime Minister: I recognise the issue that my hon. Friend has raised, and obviously the concern has been shared by our hon. and right hon. Friends and others across the House. The current system for dealing with the legacy of Northern Ireland's past is not working well for anyone. As I have said previously in this Chamber, around 3,500 were killed in the troubles, and the vast majority were murdered by terrorists. Many of these cases require further investigation, including the deaths of hundreds of members of the security forces. The system to investigate the past needs to change to provide better outcomes for victims and survivors of the troubles and to ensure that our armed forces and police officers

are not unfairly treated. The Ministry of Defence is also looking at what more can be done to ensure that service personnel are not unfairly pursued through the courts in relation to service overseas, including considering legislation, and we continue to look at how best to move forward in relation to the issues of the legacy in Northern Ireland.

Q11. [910205] **Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): South Wales Police is doing a brilliant job in Cardiff South and Penarth, in spite of pressures, dealing with knife crime, drugs, domestic violence and so much more, but it does not get capital city funding, unlike in other capitals, which makes the pressure worse. Will the Prime Minister look at this again urgently, and does she agree that we would be better off spending billions on our police instead of Brexit?

The Prime Minister: I understand that South Wales Police has been given extra funding in relation to dealing with knife crime. It is important that we deal with this issue. The hon. Gentleman raised Brexit, and it is also important that we deliver on the result of the referendum and do what is necessary to ensure that we are prepared for leaving the European Union, which is exactly what the Government are doing. However, we are focusing on the issue of serious violence, as witnessed by the knife crime summit that we held earlier this week.

Sir Christopher Chope (Christchurch) (Con): In agreeing with the 14 members of the Cabinet who are happy for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union next week, can I ask my right hon. Friend whether she will set out her vision for the benefits that will come to the United Kingdom from no deal?

The Prime Minister: I say to my hon. Friend, first, that he should not believe everything that he reads in the newspapers; the Cabinet came to a collective decision yesterday. Secondly, I have always been clear that I think the opportunities for the United Kingdom outside the European Union are bright. I believe we can build that greater Britain and that brighter future for everybody. I believe we will do that better by leaving with a good deal. I believe we have a good deal, and that is why I have been working to ensure that we can leave, do so as soon as possible and in an orderly way, and build that brighter future.

Q12. [910206] **Naz Shah** (Bradford West) (Lab): Despite the repeated efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Afzal Khan) and others in calling on the Prime Minister to adopt the all-party group on British Muslims' definition of Islamophobia, the Prime Minister refuses. Despite repeated calls for an independent inquiry into institutional Islamophobia in the Tory party by the former chair, Baroness Warsi, the Muslim Council of Britain and the Tories' own Conservative Muslim Forum, the Prime Minister again refuses. The London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, said just a few days ago:

"I have never received an explanation let alone an apology for the openly Islamophobic campaign the party ran against me in London in 2016,"

and that the attacks on him continue. I ask the Prime Minister directly today: will she now show some leadership

and at the very minimum apologise to London Mayor Sadiq Khan for the Islamophobic campaign led by her party?

The Prime Minister: As I said in response to the hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Afzal Khan), any allegations made in relation to the Conservative party are investigated carefully by the Conservative party and action is taken. This Government have been doing more to ensure that the police can deal with issues around hate crime. When I was Home Secretary, I required the police to ensure that they were properly recording incidents of hate crime, so that we could better identify Islamophobia. I am pleased to say that my right hon. Friends the Communities Secretary and the Home Secretary recently chaired a roundtable on anti-Muslim hate crime. It is being taken seriously by the Conservative party and by the Government.

Nicky Morgan (Loughborough) (Con): It is worth everyone in this place remembering that for people outside there is far, far more to life than Brexit, as illustrated by many of the questions today. In Loughborough, we are very proud of Loughborough University being the best university in the world for sports-related subjects. One group of athletes who have been much undersung in recent weeks are our Team GB athletes who took part in the Special Olympics in Abu Dhabi. One hundred and twenty-seven athletes returned with 169 medals, over 60 gold. Will the Prime Minister congratulate them, and does she think it might be time for GB to host the next Special Olympics?

The Prime Minister: I will look very carefully at my right hon. Friend's suggestion in relation to the Special Olympics. I am very happy to join her—I am sure everybody across the whole House will—in congratulating our GB team on the significant haul of medals they brought back from the Special Olympics. May I also say how much we value Loughborough University and the work it does on sports-related matters?

Q13. [910207] **Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab):** Head-teachers and governors in my constituency have cut school budgets to the bones. They are now desperately concerned about the impact on children. The Prime Minister's own advisers have been sent into schools and, as reported by *Schools Week*, their ideas are truly shocking: reducing lunch portions for some of the most disadvantaged; holding back money for charities; and even employing unqualified teachers. Does the Prime Minister agree with me that these suggestions belong to the days of the workhouse, not 21st-century England?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady knows that we are increasing the funding—£1.3 billion extra—available to schools. I am sure she will want to welcome, as I do, the fact that there are 22,500 more children in the Bristol local authority area in good and outstanding schools since 2010.

James Cleverly (Braintree) (Con): Further to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford), I thank the Prime Minister for the invitation she extended to me to her knife crime summit on Monday. Does she agree that, while the numbers and powers of police officers are important, we need to send

a message to people who would never wear a t-shirt made in a sweatshop and look carefully at the air miles of the food they buy, yet seem not to make the connection between the drug use they have in their personal lives and the damage done to young people on our streets? Will she send a message that it is not acceptable?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend raises a very important point. If we look at the extent to which knife crime is gang and drug-related, many people across our society need to ask themselves what they are doing to ensure we deal with knife crime and not see drug-related gangs committing these crimes, so that we are able to rid our society of what I believe to be the curse of drugs. I believe they have those impacts. They are bad, and that is why it is important that, as a Government, we have a very clear drugs strategy to take people off drugs and ensure we deal with this issue. My hon. Friend makes a very important point: it is a matter not just for Government or police, but for all of us across our society to deal with these issues.

Q14. [910208] **Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North) (SNP):** Freedom of movement is a good thing. It is good economically: EU citizens exercising their free movement rights contribute to our GDP. It is good socially: our communities are more diverse and more successful as a result. And it is good for our young people, who can go to Europe to study and to work. Can the Prime Minister be honest about the benefits of freedom of movement and ensure that we retain those benefits?

The Prime Minister: We want to ensure we have a migration system that enables us to welcome people into this country on the basis of the skills they will bring and the contribution they will make to this country, not of the country they happen to come from. When people voted to leave the European Union in 2016, they sent a clear message that they wanted things to change. One of the things they wanted to change was to bring an end to free movement and to ensure that it is the UK Government who are able to make decisions about who can come to this country.

Mr Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley) (Con): As the Prime Minister seeks to get her short extension upon the short extension, will she make it absolutely clear to the European Union that if they turn around and say that it has to be a long extension and that we will have to fight the European Union elections, she will say no, no, no?

The Prime Minister: We had the opportunity on Friday to cement that extension to 22 May and ensure that we left on 22 May. As I said earlier, I am grateful to all who supported that motion. Some did so with some difficulty, and with a very heavy heart. I now want us to find a position where we can, across the House, support the withdrawal agreement and a deal that enables us to leave on 22 May without having to hold European parliamentary elections. We can only do that if we come together and find a way forward that this House is willing to support.

Q15. [910209] **John Grogan (Keighley) (Lab):** The Prime Minister and I are both fans of Geoffrey Boycott, who was perhaps not best known for compromise in his prime but, like many of us, has mellowed with the years.

In the spirit of the times, will the Prime Minister find time in her busy diary to look at the compromise proposals advanced by the Mayor of South Yorkshire on the important subject of Yorkshire devolution?

The Prime Minister: We are looking seriously at issues around Yorkshire devolution. I know that it has caused some concern and there are different opinions about how it should be taken forward. The hon. Gentleman references Geoffrey Boycott, and one thing that I have always admired about Geoffrey Boycott is that he stayed at the crease, kept going and got his century in the end.

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): Further to the last question, once the Prime Minister has dealt with the rather tricky issue that is Brexit, as I am sure she will, will she move on to the much more difficult problem of devolution in Yorkshire? Now that the Secretary of State has ruled out devolution to the whole of Yorkshire, will the Prime Minister consider a devolution deal to the York city region, to include the city of York and the glorious county of North Yorkshire?

The Prime Minister: We recognise that there is in Yorkshire, as I have just said, enthusiasm for and dedication to the concept of devolution, and its potential to release and harness local people's sense of identity with Yorkshire and be of ongoing benefit to the people of Yorkshire. We need to find the right proposals that will suit the area, and I believe that my right hon. Friend the Communities Secretary has met the Yorkshire leaders. Discussions are continuing with them about a localist approach to devolution in Yorkshire different from the One Yorkshire proposal, which did not meet our criteria.

Sir Vince Cable (Twickenham) (LD): Reports from the Cabinet yesterday suggest that two proposals were put forward for cross-party co-operation to solve the Brexit crisis. One of them was to work with the Leader of the Opposition to deliver a Labour Brexit. The other was to work with the 280 MPs across the House who will support the Prime Minister's deal subject to a confirmatory referendum. Why does she trust the Leader of the Opposition more than the people?

The Prime Minister: I want to ensure that we find a resolution that the House can support, such that we can deliver Brexit in a timely fashion. I believe it is important to do that as soon as possible, and I want us to do it without having to fight the European elections. I believe

it is absolutely right, and the public would expect us, to be willing to work across the Chamber to find a resolution to this issue.

Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con): Conservative-led Redditch Borough Council has recently submitted its bid for the future high streets fund. Will the Prime Minister add her support to that bid, because the people of Redditch deserve to have our town unlocked? Does she agree that it is only with Conservatives in our town hall that we can continue to unlock Redditch after years of Labour neglect?

The Prime Minister: I commend Conservative-led Redditch council for the work that it is doing to unlock the town and to unlock the high street. My hon. Friend tempts me to support one bid over others, but there will be other of our hon. and right hon. Friends who wish me to support bids from their towns. It is important that we have made this money available, and I congratulate Redditch council, under the Conservatives, for all that it is doing to ensure the vitality of the town.

Nick Boles (Grantham and Stamford) (Ind): I find myself in a slightly curious position, sandwiched between the Liberal Democrats and the Welsh nationalists. I reassure my constituents and hon. Members that I remain a progressive Conservative while I am, sadly, independent in this House.

The Prime Minister's late conversion to compromise is welcome, but I am sure she will understand the scepticism of those of us who have been working on a cross-party compromise for many months. Can she reassure me that she will enter discussions with the Leader of the Opposition and other parties without the red lines that have bedevilled the Brexit negotiations so far?

The Prime Minister: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's indication that he remains a progressive Conservative in his thinking on various issues. I approach the discussions in a constructive spirit, because I want to find a resolution of this issue. I want to ensure that we can do what people told us we should do, which is to deliver Brexit in an orderly way that is good for this country.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr Speaker: Order.

Points of Order

12.55 pm

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Ind): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The Liaison Committee, which consists of all the Select Committee Chairs, is the only Committee that can call the Prime Minister. She has said on several occasions this afternoon that she is willing to sit down with Members from across the House, but I regret to say that, despite repeated requests, the Liaison Committee has been unable to secure a date for a hearing with the Prime Minister. Could I please seek your advice, Sir?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Lady can do and has done. I thank the hon. Lady, the Chair of the Liaison Committee, for giving notice that she intended to raise this matter on a point of order with me. I appreciate that the Prime Minister's diary will have been even busier than usual recently, but I am sure the Prime Minister recognises that her regular appearances before the Liaison Committee form an important part of her accountability to Parliament.

The hon. Lady asks how she can persuade the Prime Minister to confirm a date. I suggest that by raising the matter today, the hon. Lady may have helped to achieve that objective. If she is not immediately successful, I have no doubt that she will—following, perhaps, my repeated advice to colleagues—persist, persist and, if necessary, persist again until she accomplishes her objective. Those sessions matter. They are part of respect for, and the proper functioning of, the legislature.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr Speaker: I will come to other colleagues. We do not have a lot of time, because we have to move on to other business, but I will do my best.

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Thank you for taking this point of order at this stage in our proceedings. My concern is the accountability of Network Rail to Parliament. You may recall that twice in the last month I have raised the issue of the closure of Suggitts Lane level crossing in my constituency. Yesterday, Network Rail moved in and put up security barriers to close that crossing, despite objections from me and from North East Lincolnshire Council, a petition signed by 4,000 residents and a request from the Rail Minister to review the decision. In view of that, can you offer guidance about how I, or indeed Parliament, can hold Network Rail accountable for this action?

Mr Speaker: My advice to the hon. Gentleman is that he should obtain a copy of the *Official Report*—the transcript of today's proceedings—as soon as it becomes available. He should send it with a robust—Lincolnshire robust—covering letter to Network Rail in the hope that Network Rail will respect the force as well as the sincerity of what he has said, and that it will, in the process, take due note of what the Rail Minister has said.

If that effort is unavailing again, I suggest to the hon. Gentleman, as I did to the hon. Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston), that he should make the short journey to the Table Office to table questions, he should appear at business questions tomorrow and he should, in all appearances before the Chamber, persist.

Rosie Cooper (West Lancashire) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. May I crave your indulgence? With only sentencing left, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and every single Member of this House for the kindness they have shown me over the last two difficult years. I would also like to thank Robbie Mullen and Hope not Hate, because without their actions I might not be here. I thank the parliamentary authorities, the Parliamentary Liaison and Investigation Team, Lancashire and Merseyside police, and my new family friends, the national and Lancashire counter-terrorism units. I thank them all for continuing to protect me.

Beyond thanking so many kind people, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a serious point. I was to be murdered to send a message to the state, and to send a message to this place. Members of this House are regularly abused and attacked. Our freedoms, our way of life, our democracy is under threat, and we must do our utmost to defend it. While the Home Secretary is in his place, perhaps I might ask him to consider the Diplock process for terrorist trials. [*Applause.*]

Mr Speaker: I think the spontaneous reaction on both sides of the Chamber, joined in by the Leader of the House and other colleagues, speaks volumes. I hope that I speak on behalf of the House in saying that we have the most enormous respect and admiration for the hon. Lady. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] She has displayed courage and fortitude of which many people, and probably most of us, can only dream. In the most harrowing of circumstances, faced with an explicit and very real threat to her life from neo-Nazis, she has not wilted for a second. She has defended her own rights, she has defended the rights of her constituents, she has defended the rights of all her colleagues, and she has defended the rights of Parliament as an institution.

By this sort of poisonous, fascistic bile we will not be cowed, and the sooner the purveyors of hate, of fascism, of Nazism, of a death cult realise that, the better. I salute the hon. Lady, and I know that others will do so too—

The Leader of the House of Commons (Andrea Leadsom) *rose—*

Mr Speaker: Led, I think, by the Leader of the House.

Andrea Leadsom: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. On behalf of those on the Government Benches, I pay tribute to the hon. Member for West Lancashire (Rosie Cooper) for her courage in facing this down. We all absolutely stand with her.

Mr Speaker: I warmly thank the Leader of the House for what she has said. I think that she speaks for us all.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid) *rose—*

Mr Speaker: The Home Secretary is indicating a willingness to take part.

Sajid Javid: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. May I take this opportunity to thank the hon. Member for West Lancashire for what she has said? She has the support of the whole House and beyond, and we all absolutely stand with every word that she has just shared with the House.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for West Lancashire for the brilliant statement that she has made today, and for the incredible fortitude with which she has stood up against this appalling threat. I also thank you, Mr Speaker, for your clear declaration. We will not tolerate fascism and Nazism in our society. We will stand up for the pluralistic, multicultural, multi-ethnic Britain of which we are all, I believe, very proud.

Mr Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I wonder whether you could guide me on how I can place on record the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi) has become the first black, Asian or minority ethnic Member to be elected to the NATO Assembly from this Parliament.

Mr Speaker: I do apologise to the hon. Gentleman. I cannot listen to two people at once, but I should have been listening to him. Would he care to put the point again, very briefly?

Mr Mahmood: I wonder whether you could guide me, Mr Speaker, on how I can place on record the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Slough has become the first black, Asian or minority ethnic Member to be elected to the NATO Assembly from this Parliament.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has achieved his objective with me only once—[*Interruption*] As the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) indicates from a sedentary position—[*Interruption.*] Well, I am trying to get the pronunciation of his constituency right. I will have lessons from him later.

As far as the House is concerned, however, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr Mahmood) has achieved his objective twice, and I join in those congratulations. As the House will know, I have often referred approvingly to President Moon—the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mrs Moon), who is president of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. To be able to record our admiration for the hon. Member for Slough for what is a first is a privilege, and I thank the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr for giving me the chance to do so.

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Do you share my alarm and dismay at the footage that appeared on social media today depicting members of the Parachute Regiment firing weapons at an image of the Leader of the Opposition? The situation is alarming, because Parliament is supreme in our democracy and the armed forces serve at the pleasure of Parliament as per the Bill of Rights. Let me say, as a former reservist as well as a Member of Parliament, that this flies in the face of all the values and standards that members of the British Army should uphold. Should the House not express its deep dismay and disgust at the conduct of those soldiers?

Mr Speaker: It should, and I believe that the hon. Gentleman has done so on behalf of colleagues across the House. My understanding is that the matter is being investigated—I believe I am right in saying that the Ministry of Defence has signalled that an investigation

will take place—and that seems to me to be absolutely right. What he has said is 100% correct. I would be horrified if our service personnel were to behave in such a way in relation to any Member of the House, or the representative of any political point of view embodied in a democratic political party. It is simply an unconscionable way in which to behave.

I entirely endorse what the hon. Gentleman has just said. I have no wish to raise the temperature, but rather, in the most solemn way, to underscore the importance and utter validity of what he has said.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The Hillsborough trial has ended without the jury's reaching a conclusion. Have you had any indication from the Government yet as to their willingness or desire to make a statement on what will happen now to honour the victims of the Hillsborough tragedy and ensure that those responsible are actually held to account?

Mr Speaker: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because the matter is of intense interest across the House, not to mention in very large parts of the country. The short answer is no, I have received no indication of an intention on the part of a Minister to make a statement on the matter to the House. However, Ministers on the Treasury Bench, and the Patronage Secretary, will have heard—or will very soon hear—what the hon. Gentleman has said. If the matter is as he has described it—and I have no reason to doubt what he has said—I should be very surprised if a Minister were not shortly to offer to come to the House to make a statement. The hon. Gentleman is well familiar with what I might call the backstop option, which he could deploy if he were concerned that a statement might not be forthcoming. I will leave it at that.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Have you received any notice of a statement from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, given the appalling news this morning that the Government of Brunei are intending to introduce the stoning to death of members of the LGBT community? Given our close links with that Government—not least our military and business links, and our links through the Commonwealth—do you not agree that such a statement would be very useful to the House?

Mr Speaker: I agree. Such a statement would indeed be very useful. I have had no indication that the Foreign Secretary or one of his colleagues is minded to come to the House for that purpose, but the hon. Gentleman is an assiduous contributor to our proceedings, and I am sure he will have noted that the matter was aired in the Chamber yesterday during questions to the Foreign Secretary. I sensed that there was very much, as one would expect, a cross-party feeling on the subject, and I very much hope that it will be possible for it to be aired further in the Chamber.

I do not mind telling the hon. Gentleman that there was an application for an urgent question on the matter earlier in the week. As I knew that Foreign Office questions were coming and we were very heavily consumed by other business, I declined it at that time. However,

[Mr Speaker]

many people would judge that the matter remains urgent, and the opportunities exist for colleagues—perhaps I may use this analogy again—to deploy the backstop option in order to ensure that there is a ministerial presence in the Chamber, and to focus on the matter very soon.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. Am I right in thinking that it would not be possible to have a statement after 2 o'clock today when Parliament has sort of been taken over by the alternative Government? Is that not one of the problems with doing statements at the moment?

Mr Speaker: That is indeed a valid observation. The hon. Gentleman is right as far as today is concerned. To be fair, I do not think I was—and I do not think the hon. Member for Cardiff South and Penarth (Stephen Doughty) would suggest this—signalling that the matter could be aired by the mechanism either of an urgent question or a statement today, but of course there is always the possibility of subsequent days.

Sir Christopher Chope (Christchurch) (Con): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman) in relation to Hillsborough, Mr Speaker. May I put it on record that the gentleman in question is one of my constituents, and this will be the second occasion on which he has faced a long trial that has not resulted in any verdict and has resulted in the jury being discharged? I hope that will be taken into account if anybody thinks it reasonable for such a person to be put through a third trial.

Mr Speaker: I rather imagine the point the hon. Gentleman has made on behalf of his constituent will be heard in the appropriate quarters. If he is concerned that it might not be, it is always possible for him to send the *Official Report* to those whom he believes need to read his words in it. I think we will leave it there for now, but I thank him; he has raised a serious point of a legal character, and he is representing his constituent, and I respect that.

I remind the House that under the Order of the House of 1 April I must interrupt any proceedings at 2 pm, when I will call a Member to move the business of the House motion. I therefore intend to bring proceedings on the statement to a close at approximately 1.45 pm to allow time for the presentation of the Bill and the ten-minute rule motion.

Windrush Compensation Scheme

1.12 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid): With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the Windrush compensation scheme. Copies of the response to the consultation are available from the Vote Office.

The United Kingdom has a proud history of welcoming arrivals from around the world. We have long held open the door to those who want to come and help build a better country, including my parents, for example, or indeed the parents of the shadow Home Secretary, and we have all benefited as a result, with the UK emerging as a stronger, broader, more vibrant and successful nation. We would not be the country we are today without the men and women who crossed oceans to come here legally, to make their homes, to work hard, to pay taxes and to raise their families, and we all know it, which is why the whole country was shocked by the unacceptable treatment experienced by some members of the Windrush generation. People who have built their lives in this country, people who have done so much for this country, people who have every right to be in this country were told they were not welcome. It was a terrible mistake and it should never have happened, and that it did is a matter of profound regret to me, to my Department and to the Government.

That is why just under a year ago one of my first acts as Home Secretary was to stand at this Dispatch Box and say sorry on behalf of successive Governments: sorry to the parents and grandparents who suffered the trauma of being incorrectly ordered to leave the country they love; sorry to those who had paid taxes here for decades only to be denied the NHS care to which they were perfectly entitled; sorry to hard-working men and women who were unfairly refused the right to work, and even refused the dignity of a roof over their head. However, I know that words alone are not enough, which is why, 11 months ago, I did not just say sorry to members of the Windrush generation; I also vowed to right the wrongs that had been done to them. I sincerely hope that the compensation scheme being unveiled today goes some way to doing that. It has taken longer than I would have liked, but if we are to deliver justice for the Windrush generation and their families it is vital that we get this right.

Today's scheme is the product of many months of work with affected individuals and their representatives, including well over 2,000 responses to our call for evidence and the consultation. We are also indebted to Martin Forde QC, who has provided us with invaluable independent advice and met with a great many of the individuals who were directly affected. His findings have contributed hugely to the final design of the scheme and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Martin for his work.

As a result of this meticulous approach, I am confident that the proposals for the scheme are closely aligned with what affected communities wanted to see: namely, that it is simple, accessible and, above all, fair. Full information is now available online and via a free telephone hotline number. Guidance is being provided to help people to understand what compensation they might be entitled to and how to submit a claim, and the application process itself is as simple and clear as possible.

It is also important to note that the scheme is open not only to those of Caribbean origin. The Government propose broadly to align eligibility with the Commonwealth citizens taskforce. This means that Commonwealth citizens settled in the UK before 1973, along with certain children and grandchildren of theirs, are eligible to apply if they have losses to claim for. Other eligible groups include those of any nationality who have a right of abode or settled status or are now British citizens who arrived to live in the UK before 31 December 1988.

Of course the historical nature of the wrongs done means that some of those who have been affected throughout the years are, sadly, not alive to see justice being done. Where this is the case we propose to accept claims from the estates of individuals who would themselves have been eligible had they not passed away and from close family members of an eligible person.

However, justice will not be done if people do not know about the scheme, or for any reason are afraid to engage with it. So in addition to today's media coverage we will launch an extensive programme of events with key stakeholders, community groups and faith organisations so that people across the country and overseas know about the compensation they can apply for.

On 22 June, we will be marking the second annual Windrush Day, a celebration of everything that the Windrush generation and their descendants have contributed to the UK, and later this evening I will be welcoming community group leaders to Parliament, alongside some of those who have suffered and their families. It will be an opportunity to reflect not only on the mistakes of successive Governments that brought us to this point but on what we as a country can do to ensure such mistakes are never repeated.

Wendy Williams' review will explore how members of the Windrush generation came to be treated like illegal migrants, and I look forward to receiving her recommendations, but there is no doubt that the roots lie in a historical policy that saw people given settled status without also being given the ability to prove it. Nothing we say or do will ever wipe away the hurt, the trauma and the loss that should never have been suffered by the men and women of the Windrush generation, but together we can begin to right the wrongs of Windrush. We can begin to turn the page on this sad chapter in our history and we can do justice by people who have contributed immeasurably to our country.

When the UK called out for help, thousands of people from the Caribbean and across the Commonwealth stepped up to help to get us back on our feet. Now it is time for us to step up and do what is right by those whom we have failed. I commend this statement to the House.

1.18 pm

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): I thank the Home Secretary for early sight of his statement. I also wish to place on record our gratitude to Martin Forde QC and his colleagues for the advice he has provided. I would like to say at this point that none of the delays in this process is attributable to him.

We have to remember in this House how much pride the Windrush generation took in being British. We have to remember that they came here in good faith under passports which indicated to them that they were indeed

British. There are all the material challenges they faced as part of the Windrush scandal but, above all, having to spoken to numbers of these people, there was the humiliation of being told year on year by the British state that somehow they were not British, they were not worthy, they were not deserving and services they had paid into for years and years were not available to them.

The reality is that this is a scandal that should never have happened. It is a scandal to which the Government were initially slow to react and it is a scandal in which some Members of Parliament deliberately muddled the waters with talk of illegal immigrants, when, by definition, none of the Windrush victims is here illegally. It is a scandal that is set to continue unless and until the Government end their hostile environment. It is also a scandal that is set to multiply with the 3 million EU citizens because of the Government's refusal to guarantee all their existing rights and, I am sorry to say, because of the lack of preparedness at the Home Office.

The Prime Minister told us that she would fight "burning injustices". Well, the Windrush scandal was a burning injustice and it took place on her watch, first as Home Secretary and then as Prime Minister. Her successor as Home Secretary was obliged to relinquish her post because she incorrectly told the House that there were no numerical deportation targets. We have since learned that the right hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Amber Rudd) had written to the Prime Minister promising to increase deportations by 10%. We also know that deportation numbers were a key performance indicator when she presided over home affairs, and that Home Office officials received bonuses relating to the numbers of deportees. It is hard not to imagine that these targets, performance indicators and bonuses did not affect the lack of care with which the Windrush generation were treated. The current Home Secretary told the House in April last year:

"I will do whatever it takes to put it right".

He also said:

"We have made it clear that a Commonwealth citizen who has remained in the UK since 1973 will be eligible to get the legal status that they deserve: British citizenship."—[*Official Report*, 30 April 2018; Vol. 640, c. 35.]

And yet here we are. We know that many citizens from the Commonwealth who have been here since 1973 have still not been granted British citizenship and are still not treated as British citizens.

On this side of the House, we welcome the fact that the compensation scheme will be open to the estates of deceased Windrush generation persons and also to their relatives. They were an ageing cohort, and it is only fair that their relatives should be able to claim. We also welcome the fact that the Home Secretary accepts that this is not just about persons from the Caribbean. The Windrush generation is so called because of that emblematic symbol, the Empire Windrush, but it actually involves anyone from a Commonwealth country who came to this country between 1948 and 1972. I believe that many more persons will need to come forward if we are really going to clear up this scandal.

Will the Home Secretary say a little about the hardship fund, which was set up in response to pressure from my hon. Friends to deal with the immediate issues faced by the Windrush generation? How much is available to the hardship fund as a whole? Is it true that thus far only two people have had payments from the fund? We are

[Ms Diane Abbott]

glad to have further details of the compensation scheme itself, but I believe that it still falls short of what is expected, what is required and what is fair. Is the Home Secretary able to tell the House how much is available for the compensation scheme as a whole? Is he willing to comment on the fact that the scheme will not compensate those who may have gone back to the Caribbean or elsewhere in the Commonwealth for a holiday or a funeral and who were not allowed to get back on the plane? The document states that it is difficult to ascertain “whether inability to return to the UK is a loss”.

Of course it is a loss. That is an extraordinary thing to say. We know that people were wrongly prevented from returning to their home here. The Home Secretary admits that. One of the reasons was that they were unable to provide documentary proof of their status. Now the Home Secretary proposes to exclude them from compensation. These people were British citizens, yet they were unable to return to their home here and in some cases they were separated from their families. This is not ending the scandal; it continues it.

The Home Secretary and the Government propose to make a contribution towards legal fees only up to a fixed amount and will not reimburse for fees higher than that amount. This is despite the fact that these legal costs, which are easily documented, were incurred in challenging wrongful loss of jobs, deprivation of public services including the NHS, loss of home, wrongful detention and wrongful deportation. We also note that there will be no compensation for private healthcare for persons living in this country who were unable to access the NHS care they were entitled to.

The remedies provided by the scheme will include an apology and ex gratia payments. The Government will make these compensation payments voluntarily, without necessarily establishing a formal legal obligation. Surely there must be a formal legal obligation. I do not think we can rely—

Mr Speaker: Order. I say very gently to the shadow Home Secretary that this is going to be talked out, as things stand, because we have only until 1.45 and about 20 colleagues want to take part.

Ms Abbott: I am grateful to the Speaker.

Let me say finally that there are some in this House who are the children of the Windrush generation. Whether we are on the Front Benches or the Back Benches, and whether we are in opposition or in government, we will not rest until that generation, one of the bravest generations, gets the justice to which it is entitled.

Sajid Javid: I thank the right hon. Lady for her comments and also for what she said about Martin Forde QC and the work he has done to make this scheme a reality. She started by saying that this should never have happened. I absolutely agree with her and always have. I think the whole House agrees on that. Of course none of the people who were caught up were here illegally; they had every right to be here.

The right hon. Lady has referred to the compliant environment. Sadly, she talks about it as though it were an environment that had been put in place since 2010. However, she knows that the right to check whether

someone is here illegally and a number of other rules and regulations were put in under the previous Labour Government. She talks about how people were affected, and we are all trying to deal with this issue and to provide justice, but it is worth reminding the House that when the historical review was done and it was determined that 164 people were the most likely to have suffered detriment, almost half of them had suffered detriment under the previous Labour Government. It is worth keeping it in mind that successive Governments have in effect caused this problem, and it is no good trying to point the finger at one particular Government.

The right hon. Lady talked about the EU settlement scheme. It is precisely because of the lessons of Windrush that we need a scheme that cannot just be declaratory in approach. We need to ensure that our EU friends who are here in this country are properly documented. The abiding lesson from Windrush is the lack of proper documentation. She has rightly talked about those who want to have UK citizenship, and she knows that we have set up a special route for that. Approximately 4,000 people have taken advantage of that, at no cost to themselves. She is also right to say that the scheme is not just open to people of Caribbean origin, and I am glad we agree on that. She asked about the urgent exceptional payments fund. This is not just another compensation scheme; it is supposed to deal just with urgent exceptional payments. It is not capped, and I understand that nine payments have been made so far.

The right hon. Lady also asked about the compensation scheme, and how much it was likely to cost. There is no cap on the scheme, so no one knows what the eventual cost will be. It will be based on people's needs and the claims that are made by eligible people, but the baseline estimate from my Department is that it will be approximately £200 million. She also referred to legal fees and private healthcare costs. I can tell her that in both those cases, although there is a tariff structure, both allow for actuals being paid in certain circumstances where proof is provided.

Suella Braverman (Fareham) (Con): My parents came to the UK in the late 1960s from Mauritius and Kenya, both of which are Commonwealth countries. They came with no one and with nothing except a desire to make their lives in Britain and to serve our country, like the parents of many in this room. They could have been caught up in this episode, so I welcome the Home Secretary's commitment and action and his statement today. Does he agree that the compensation scheme represents real progress towards securing justice for the Windrush generation and that the independent Wendy Williams lessons learned review is the vital next step in the process?

Sajid Javid: I agree with my hon. Friend, and I want to take this opportunity to thank her parents and the parents of millions of others for their contributions to this country. I agree with her about the importance of Wendy Williams's work, which will be a vital step to ensuring that we right the wrongs.

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): I thank the Home Secretary for advance sight of his statement. Of course, it is imperative that the victims of the Windrush scandal are

compensated justly for their outrageous and disgraceful treatment. If the scheme delivers some sort of justice, that will be welcome, but we need more information before we can finalise our judgment. I welcome what the Home Secretary says about there being no cap on the scheme, because the needs of victims, not the choices of the Treasury, must drive the total amount of compensation.

Will the Home Secretary explain exactly what the Home Office will be compensating? Is it only financial losses, or will the devastating impact on health, wellbeing, family relationships and other aspects of life that so many have suffered also be considered? Can he tell us whether claiming compensation will preclude victims from seeking other forms of redress from the Home Office, including through the courts, and will the nine people who have been able to claim from the hardship fund also be able to claim under the compensation scheme? It is welcome that the compensation scheme is not restricted to Caribbean countries, but why is the Department not undertaking work to find victims of the scandal from all Commonwealth countries, rather than restricting case reviews just to Caribbean countries? The Home Office has ruined the lives of citizens from all around the Commonwealth, so it should be taking steps to fix and compensate all those cases.

Finally, the Home Secretary referred to the shock felt by the whole country in response to Windrush, but it should not have been a shock to the then Home Secretary, now the Prime Minister, or her Department because the Department had been repeatedly warned that it was an inevitable consequence of the hostile environment. We still need to know why the Home Office ignored its own warnings and pressed ahead with the hostile environment regardless. When will the lessons learned review be published, and when will the Home Secretary start rolling back on hostile environment policies such as the right to rent?

Sajid Javid: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments. I reiterate again that, for all the right reasons, there is no cap on this scheme. He asked whether only financial losses will be considered, but if other detriment has been suffered—people may have been wrongly detained, for example—the scheme will consider that. He also asked whether people who have used the urgent payment fund will be eligible to apply under scheme. Absolutely, if they meet the eligibility criteria, and depending on the claim, there is no link between the two schemes.

The hon. Gentleman welcomed the fact that the scheme is not limited to Commonwealth citizens of Caribbean origin; it is broader than that. It is right that we have focused on those whom all the evidence suggested are more likely to have suffered detriment, but it is also right that the scheme is not limited to Commonwealth citizens of Caribbean origin. He rightly referred to the Wendy Williams's review, which will be vital to ensure that we get everything right.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. Traditionally, there is slightly greater latitude for the Chair of a Select Committee, but in view of the time constraints it would be appreciated if colleagues could confine themselves to a single-sentence question without preamble. Otherwise, lots of people will be prevented from speaking.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): My constituent was unable to work for a considerable period of time, but that situation was resolved thanks to Government action. However, he is now struggling financially again because his wife is suffering from cancer, so how soon will he be able to claim? The links on gov.uk are not completely clear, so how easy is it to find the website? How soon might my constituent be able to get some money in his bank account to help him?

Sajid Javid: I am very sorry to hear about my hon. Friend's constituent's situation. The claims can begin from today, and the information has just gone up online. We have also set up a freephone helpline, and a number of people in the Home Office will be dedicated to the scheme. We want to process the claims and make payments as soon as possible.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): The Home Office took six months to agree to the urgent hardship scheme, nine months to set out the policy for it and, within 12 months of the Windrush scandal, it had helped only two of the 48 people who had applied. I understand that the number is now up to nine even though there were serious, urgent cases in which help was needed. What will the Home Secretary do to ensure that we do not see the same delays with this compensation scheme, which will provide the welcome support that people need?

Sajid Javid: It was important to get the scheme right, so we wanted to ensure that we consulted as many people as possible, which is why we had the call for evidence first. Indeed, Martin Forde, the independent assessor of the scheme, asked for extra time to meet more community leaders and more people who were affected. I believe that we have got it right now, and I am committed to ensuring that those who are eligible receive their compensation as quickly as possible.

Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con): I welcome the Home Secretary's statement and the work that his Department has done on the scheme. When he responded to the Home Affairs Committee report on 24 July last year, noting the end of the consultation on 11 October, he said he wanted this scheme to be implemented "quickly and carefully after that."

Will he explain the length of time between the consultation closing and this announcement, because some are concerned that it has taken six months? Was it correct to take that time to get things right?

Sajid Javid: We received some 1,400 responses to the consultation, which is high for any consultation, and we wanted to ensure that they were all considered carefully. We worked closely with Martin Forde and others and wanted to ensure that the systems were in place from day one when the compensation scheme went live. Now that it is live, we will be able to process claims quickly.

Mr David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab): Will the Home Secretary undertake to publicise the scheme as widely as the EU settlement scheme? Will he ensure that there is no use of non-disclosure agreements around how much compensation people get? Many people were driven into poverty and therefore crime as a consequence

[Mr David Lammy]

of the scandal, so will he say whether people with criminal convictions will still be entitled to use the scheme?

Sajid Javid: We will absolutely publicise the scheme widely. Indeed, the right hon. Gentleman, who is committed to providing justice for the Windrush generation, can help me by using his Twitter feed, and there are other ways of helping more people to know about this scheme. There will be no non-disclosure agreements under this scheme, and people with criminal convictions are entitled to use it. The details state that if individuals with serious convictions apply, the Government reserve the right to change the amount of compensation or not pay it altogether, but generally no one is barred owing to a criminal conviction.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): I heard the dignified evidence given to the Joint Committee on Human Rights by some of the Windrush generation. I was astonished that some were still put into this position despite providing huge amounts of documentation. What support is being given to those in the Windrush generation, or indeed anybody else, who have been dismissed despite having all this evidence in front of them?

Sajid Javid: My hon. Friend is right to raise that. I remember looking at cases in which such outcomes should not have happened. We have made the compensation scheme as simple and as straightforward as possible. For example, some payments have both a tariff structure and an actual structure, because we are trying to provide as much choice as possible.

Chuka Umunna (Streatham) (Ind): I represent the Windrush borough of Lambeth, where many residents have been directly affected by the scandal. The Home Secretary's officials actually came down to help implement some of the measures introduced by his Department, but I have to say that his processes have been anything but simple and accessible. What confidence can he give us that this scheme will be any different?

Sajid Javid: We have looked carefully at how the scheme is going to be implemented. For example, that is why, along with the online information, there is guidance on how the applications work and how to make them easier, and there is also this freephone number. There will also be dedicated staff in the Home Office working on the scheme. The scheme will be open for at least two years, and I commit to consider any issues and whether improvements can be made. If hon. Members make any suggestions, we will absolutely look at them.

Janet Daby (Lewisham East) (Lab): Victims of the Windrush scandal need to be compensated for all their losses. Can the Home Secretary assure me that that will include any trauma that has been experienced?

Sajid Javid: In our publication today, we set out carefully what type of eligibility and what type of losses can be covered. I believe that, with the consultation process and with the support of Martin Forde, it is a very fair process.

Sir Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): Given that the hostile environment is clearly one cause of the Windrush scandal, have the Government accepted the recent High Court judgment against right-to-rent checks?

Sajid Javid: The right hon. Gentleman may know that we are appealing that judgment.

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): Will the Home Secretary look at the case of my constituent who has been refused an exceptional hardship payment, which she wants so she can visit her 95-year-old mother with dementia and her father's grave in Grenada? She was told by the Department to save up for it.

Sajid Javid: I would be happy to take a look.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): Will the Home Secretary extend the compensation scheme to highly skilled migrants wronged by the Home Office? Can he explain why the cases I have raised in the press have been resolved and those I have not raised in the press have not been resolved?

Sajid Javid: The eligibility for the scheme is very wide. I set it out earlier in my statement, and it will almost certainly include many highly skilled migrants.

Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): As well as the publicity drive that the Home Secretary has talked about, will his officials be going through, with their fingertips, every case of other Commonwealth citizens who are caught up in this?

Sajid Javid: We want to make sure that no one is left out. We have, for reasons I have previously explained in the House, focused on those of Caribbean origin, but that process of trying to find those who may have been wronged continues.

Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): Will the compensation scheme cover the huge distress caused to those such as my constituent Paulette Wilson? She was detained at Yarl's Wood and then Heathrow detention centre, and she was very nearly deported back to a country she had not been to since the age of 10.

Sajid Javid: One category we have also included in the compensation is a discretionary category, because we are well aware that, although we can identify some of the most likely detriments to compensate, there may be some exceptional cases, and I want to make sure that nothing is left out by the compensation scheme.

Liz Kendall (Leicester West) (Lab): Will the Home Secretary look into the case of my constituent Mr Espedy Alvester Thomas? He has once again applied for a passport, this time under the Windrush scheme, and he still has not had a decision. Will the Home Secretary assure me that he will take every action to make sure similar delays do not happen with this compensation scheme?

Sajid Javid: I would be happy to look into that case.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Home Secretary publish a comprehensive breakdown of all those wrongfully detained or deported by his Department as a result of the hostile environment, on top of the Windrush victims?

Sajid Javid: The hon. Gentleman will be well aware that we regularly supply a letter to the Select Committee containing much information on the scheme, and I will take his suggestion into account.

Jo Stevens (Cardiff Central) (Lab): Many, many victims of this tragedy will be pulling together complex cases involving heads of loss across many areas. Will legal aid be available to those who need it?

Sajid Javid: We are looking carefully into what kind of support is needed, because some cases will be less complex. In the kind of complex case suggested by the hon. Lady, we want to make sure that people have help, if they need it, to put their case together. We want to make sure that no one is denied justice and that people can make a proper claim.

Jessica Morden (Newport East) (Lab): Will the Home Secretary acknowledge that reassurances so far have not been enough for some people who are too afraid to admit that they have no status here? I know that from my constituency. Will he do more to reassure people to come forward?

Sajid Javid: The hon. Lady makes a very important point. We want to make sure everyone feels they can, first, come forward to the Windrush scheme itself, in terms of documentation, passports and the work of the taskforce, and, secondly, make claims for compensation. For example, no information relating to those who come forward to the compensation scheme will be supplied to immigration enforcement, or in respect of any other issues and concerns that people might have.

Liz McInnes (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab): Will a fixed address or a bank account be required to claim compensation? Some people will have been denied access to these under the hostile environment.

Sajid Javid: It would certainly be helpful if a claimant for compensation has a bank account, but we have set out to make sure that justice is done in the fairest way possible. If there are exceptional circumstances in how we pay compensation, we will of course take that into account.

Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): Will the Home Office fund independent legal advice for those Windrush citizens who may not be able to navigate the Home Office website system or who may feel entirely unable directly to approach a Department that has so comprehensively breached their trust?

Sajid Javid: As I mentioned earlier, we have tried to make it as simple as we can to navigate, with guidance and a freephone number. If anyone finds themselves in that circumstance, I suggest that the first thing they do is call the freephone number.

Stephen Pound (Ealing North) (Lab): Sixty-six of the immigrants carried on HMT Empire Windrush were, in fact, Polish nationals, mostly relatives of those who had fought for the allies from El Alamein to Monte Cassino and beyond. Have they, or their descendants, been involved or consulted in any way during this process?

Sajid Javid: I do not have a list of everyone who responded to the consultation—there were some 1,400 respondents—but the consultation was wide-ranging and we had responses from many different nationalities.

Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): Is there a risk of a further Windrush, as hundreds of thousands of EU citizens who are applying for their rights risk missing the deadline? Will the Home Secretary accept the cross-party calls to enshrine their rights in law to avoid this situation?

Sajid Javid: It is precisely because we want to avoid another Windrush situation that it cannot be sufficient just to enshrine rights in law. What is needed with the EU settlement scheme is a proper process of documentation from day one.

BILL PRESENTED

EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS (SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE AND FLEXIBLE WORKING) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Jo Swinson presented a Bill to entitle employees to request shared parental leave and flexible working on the first day of employment; to make provision for self-employed persons to take shared parental leave; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 5 April, and to be printed (Bill 374).

Animals (Recognition of Sentience)

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

1.46 pm

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to impose a duty on public bodies in relation to the welfare needs of animals as sentient beings.

Back in November 2017, I added my name to an amendment to the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill tabled by the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas). New clause 30 called for the EU protocol on animal sentience, as set out in the Lisbon treaty, to be recognised in domestic law post-Brexit. As every Member knows, animal welfare issues are always popular with constituents, and this was no exception. There was a mass email campaign and vocal support from non-governmental organisations. It was clear that the public wanted the reassurance of including it in the Bill.

The Government, for reasons best known to themselves, were less enthused and tried to argue that the concept of animals as sentient beings was already enshrined in English law, but the backlash was fierce. There was a lot of press coverage suggesting that Government Members had voted in the belief that animals cannot feel pain, which was slightly unfair, but the public were clearly unhappy.

Forced to act, the Government tabled the three-clause draft Animal Welfare (Sentencing and Recognition of Sentience) Bill in December 2017. This was the Government promising the House that they would legislate. Indeed, the Prime Minister also said that. The Government were promising that they would legislate before Brexit day, which we thought at the time would be 29 March 2019.

The consultation on the draft Bill closed on 31 January 2018, and the Select Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on which I sit, carried out pre-legislative scrutiny and recommended splitting the Bill so that the largely uncontroversial sentencing provision could be dealt with separately. I am not focusing on the sentencing provision today, but I genuinely do not understand why the Government have not been able to act in the intervening period to increase maximum jail sentences for animal cruelty from six months to five years—it would take a day of parliamentary time and it has public support. The Government purport to support it, too, so why not treat animal cruelty with the severity under law that it deserves?

It was not until August 2018 that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs got round to publishing the outcome of the consultation on the draft Bill, having apparently been overwhelmed by the public response, with over 9,000 direct submissions and another 64,000 from 38 Degrees members.

DEFRA took on board the Select Committee's recommendation to split the Bill, but since then we have had nothing. Just warm words and a lukewarm promise to legislate. In October 2018, the Secretary of State told the Tory conference:

"Animals are our fellow sentient beings. They show loyalty and devotion, and they know pleasure and pain."

In February, at the "A Better Deal for Animals" parliamentary reception, which brought together 36 of the UK's largest and most effective animal protection organisations, he said:

"Animals are sentient beings who feel pain and suffering, so it is absolutely right that we recognise this in UK law after we leave the EU".

Just last week, the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the hon. Member for Macclesfield (David Rutley), who has responsibility for animal welfare and I am glad to see in his place, told the EFRA Committee that the Government were committed to legislating "as soon as possible" and were "looking for a vehicle" to bring this forward. Today, I am providing that vehicle for the Government, and if the Minister wants to take over from me in the driving seat, I would be more than happy for him to do so.

Turning to the detail of what I am proposing, the Bill recognises animal sentience and ensures that all vertebrates, cephalopods and decapods, including crustaceans, octopuses and squid, are legally defined as sentient beings. It also includes a mechanism for the list to be expanded in the future, based on the latest science. Aristotle once described the octopus as a "stupid creature", but we now know that that is far from the case—indeed, sometimes I think it is far more intelligent than quite a lot of us. To be clear, recognising sentience is about recognising that animals are capable of experiencing pain and suffering, that they have welfare needs and that Government policies should, to the greatest possible extent, and taking into account other policy needs, result in a good life for the animals concerned.

My Bill creates a framework for a mandatory process by which the Government and public bodies will implement and report against the sentience duty. Specifically, it will establish an independent animal welfare advisory committee; provide a mechanism for informed assessment of animal welfare impact risk, taking into consideration the specific welfare needs of the species affected, weighed against other public policy needs; provide animal welfare guidance to Departments, as well as a triage process to allow Departments to prioritise resources for risk assessments on those policies with the potential to cause the greatest harm to the greatest number of animals; require full transparency from the Government, in real time, on assessments undertaken, policy options considered and reasons for the choice of the final policy option and so on; and provide a mechanism for public consultation. There is more in the Bill on reporting and reviews that I will not go into now.

The creation of an animal welfare advisory committee is fundamental, as it would issue guidance on how the animal sentience principles should be interpreted and applied, and ensure that the duty is discharged. It is clear to me that no existing body could undertake this role effectively or adequately replace the current advice of EU institutions. To perform this function, the committee will need: to have an open, transparent recruitment process; to include independent members with appropriately wide-ranging specialist perspectives and expertise, in both animal welfare and ethical review; to be able to co-opt additional expertise as required; to be able to liaise with stakeholders and respect their views; to be transparent in its advice; and to include a mechanism to take representations, including concerns and complaints, from the public.

The reality is that if we do not legislate for this now, there is a risk: that imports of lower-welfare animal products could be permitted under new trade deals; that developers may not have to consider the impact of new roads, housing or major infrastructure projects on wildlife in the area; that the UK could, through its overseas aid or trade programmes, invest in the kind of intensive farming systems that are not allowed in the UK because of animal welfare concerns; and that it would be more difficult to take action against inhumane wildlife management practices and wildlife crime. Those are just a few examples.

As the Minister knows, there is widespread support for enshrining sentience in UK law. Since February alone, almost 70,000 people have signed the parliamentary petition to recognise it in law, and 101 Members from across this House have signed early-day motion 2070. I want to thank organisations such as Wildlife and Countryside Link, World Animal Protection, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Humane Society International, Compassion in World Farming and the splendidly named Crustacean Compassion for their support and assistance with this Bill and their campaigning.

We pride ourselves in this country on our strong record on animal welfare, and we are right to do so, but we should never be complacent. There are many examples where we could and should do better. There are pressures on us, economic and global, that could lead us to backslide. We should always be vigilant and guard against that. I know that some, a minority, still question whether this Bill is needed. Some people want greater licence to ignore animal welfare concerns, whether that be so that they can cram animals into ever-more intensive and industrialised farming systems, or so that they can pursue so-called “country sports”. The fact is that this Government promised this legislation. Indeed, they staved off a major Commons defeat—and no doubt there would have also been defeat in the Lords—with that promise. That was back in November 2017. It is now time for the Government to keep their promise to this House and to the British people, and to back my Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That Kerry McCarthy, Darren Jones, Daniel Zeichner, Alex Cunningham, Henry Smith, Sir Roger Gale, Bob Blackman, Caroline Lucas, Ben Lake, Mr Alistair Carmichael and Dr Lisa Cameron present the Bill.

Kerry McCarthy accordingly presented the Bill.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 5 April, and to be printed (Bill 375 .)

Business of the House

Mr Speaker: I must inform the House that I have selected amendment (a) in the name of the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), and that he will be called to move that amendment at the end of the debate.

1.55 pm

Sir Oliver Letwin (West Dorset) (Con): I beg to move, That—

(1) At today's sitting—

- (a) the order of the House of 1 April (Business of the House) shall apply as if, at the end of paragraph (2)(a), there were inserted “and then to proceedings on the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 5) Bill”;
- (b) any proceedings governed by that order as amended or this order may be proceeded with until any hour, though opposed, and shall not be interrupted;
- (c) immediately upon the conclusion of proceedings under the order of 1 April, the Speaker shall call a Member to move the motion that the European Union (Withdrawal) (No.5) Bill be now read a second time;
- (d) the Speaker may not propose the question on the previous question, and may not put any question under Standing Order No. 36 (Closure of debate) or Standing Order No. 163 (Motion to sit in private);
- (e) any proceedings interrupted or superseded by this order may be resumed or (as the case may be) entered upon and proceeded with after the moment of interruption.

(2) In respect of the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 5) Bill, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.

(3) The provisions of this order shall apply to and in connection with the proceedings on the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 5) Bill.

Timetable for the Bill today

(4) (a) Proceedings on Second Reading and in Committee of the whole House, any proceedings on Consideration and proceedings up to and including Third Reading shall be taken at the sitting today in accordance with this Order.

- (b) Proceedings on Second Reading shall be brought to a conclusion (so far as not previously concluded) at 7.00 pm.
- (c) Proceedings in Committee of the whole House, any proceedings on Consideration and proceedings up to and including Third Reading shall be brought to a conclusion (so far as not previously concluded) at 10.00 pm.

Timing of proceedings and Questions to be put today

(5) When the Bill has been read a second time:

- (a) it shall, notwithstanding Standing Order No. 63 (Committal of bills not subject to a programme order), stand committed to a Committee of the whole House without any Question being put;
- (b) the Speaker shall leave the Chair whether or not notice of an Instruction has been given.

(6) (a) On the conclusion of proceedings in Committee of the whole House, the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

- (b) If the Bill is reported with amendments, the House shall proceed to consider the Bill as amended without any Question being put.

(7) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph (4), the Chairman or Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions in the same order as they would fall to be put if this Order did not apply—

- (a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;
- (b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed;
- (c) the Question on any amendment, new clause or new schedule selected by the Chair or Speaker for separate decision;
- (d) the Question on any amendment moved or Motion made by a designated Member;
- (e) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded; and shall not put any other Questions, other than the Question on any motion described in paragraph (16) of this Order.

(8) On a Motion made for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

Consideration of Lords Amendments and Messages on a subsequent day

(9) If any message on the Bill (other than a message that the House of Lords agrees with the Bill without amendment or agrees with any message from this House) is expected from the House of Lords on any future sitting day, the House shall not adjourn until that message has been received and any proceedings under paragraph (10) have been concluded.

(10) On any day on which such a message is received, if a designated Member indicates to the Speaker an intention to proceed to consider that message—

- (a) notwithstanding Standing Order No. 14(1) (which provides that government business shall have precedence at every sitting save as provided in that order), any Lords Amendments to the Bill or any further Message from the Lords on the Bill may be considered forthwith without any Question being put; and any proceedings interrupted for that purpose shall be suspended accordingly;
- (b) proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments or on any further Message from the Lords shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour after their commencement; and any proceedings suspended under subparagraph (a) shall thereupon be resumed;
- (c) the Speaker may not propose the question on the previous question, and may not put any question under Standing Order No. 36 (Closure of debate) or Standing Order No. 163 (Motion to sit in private).

(11) Paragraphs (2) to (7) of Standing Order No. 83F (Programme orders: conclusion of proceedings on consideration of Lords amendments) apply for the purposes of bringing any proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments to a conclusion as if:

- (a) any reference to a Minister of the Crown were a reference to a designated Member;
- (b) after paragraph (4)(a) there is inserted –
 “(aa) the question on any amendment or motion selected by the Speaker for separate decision;”.

(12) Paragraphs (2) to (5) of Standing Order No. 83G (Programme orders: conclusion of proceedings on further messages from the Lords) apply for the purposes of bringing any proceedings on consideration of a Lords Message to a conclusion as if:

- (a) any reference to a Minister of the Crown were a reference to a designated Member;
- (b) in paragraph (5), the words “subject to paragraphs (6) and (7)” were omitted.

Reasons Committee

(13) Paragraphs (2) to (6) of Standing Order No. 83H (Programme orders: reasons committee) apply in relation to any committee to be appointed to draw up reasons after proceedings have been brought to a conclusion in accordance with this Order as if any reference to a Minister of the Crown were a reference to a designated Member.

Miscellaneous

(14) Standing Order No. 82 (Business Committee) shall not apply in relation to any proceedings on the Bill to which this Order applies.

(15) No Motion shall be made, except by a designated Member, to alter the order in which any proceedings on the Bill are taken, to recommit the Bill or to vary or supplement the provisions of this Order.

(16) (a) No dilatory Motion shall be made in relation to proceedings on the Bill to which this Order applies except by a designated Member.

(b) The Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(17) Proceedings to which this Order applies shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(18) No private business may be considered at any sitting to which the provisions of this order apply.

(19) In this Order, “a designated Member” means –

- (a) the Member in charge of the Bill; and
- (b) any other Member backing the Bill and acting on behalf of that Member.

For the avoidance of doubt, I should begin by saying that it is the feeling of both the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and me that we should accept amendment (a), which provides for the possibility of indicative votes on Monday, should that be necessary in the light of discussions between those on the Front Benches between now and then, which I strongly welcome.

This House has debated a number of measures in the past few weeks about the Order Paper and Standing Orders, and who controls them. I am sure that some of my right hon. and hon. Friends, some of whom have made learned and important speeches about the subject already, will wish to raise those issues again. Of course, I am happy to respond to any points made in the course of my remarks about that matter, but I do not intend to dwell on it all over again, because I have more or less said what I had to say about that subject. I just want to refer to the substance of the business of the House motion.

The first question that needs to be addressed is: why bother with this business of the House motion and, therefore, why bother at this point to consider the Bill that stands in the name of the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford, of which I and others are backers, given that the Government have already said they are going to seek an extension, which, again, is an enormously welcome development? I say to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench that it is not that I have any doubt that the Government will now wish to seek an extension and avoid the cliff edge of a no-deal exit on 12 April, but rather that there is concern that there should be a transparent and orderly statutory process or framework within which the House has an opportunity to consider the length of the extension that is asked for and to provide the Prime Minister with backing for her request to the EU in an unequivocal and transparent way. That is the purpose of ensuring that we consider the Bill that follows this business of this House motion, and therefore the main purpose of the business of the House motion is simply to provide for the proceedings on that Bill.

The second question I wish to address is that of the speed with which we are considering the Bill. I would much prefer to have had considerably longer set out in

the business of the House motion for consideration of the implications of the Bill, because, as right hon. and hon. Members will see when it is debated, although the Bill is short, it is nevertheless significant and there are significant details associated with it. It would have been nice to have a considerable time in which to debate and consider it over a number of days, as is normal. Unfortunately, there is no point in legislating if that which we are legislating about has occurred before the time when the legislation would be relevant.

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): I am listening very carefully. My right hon. Friend said that the emergency legislation process is necessary but, as the whole House knows, the reality is that the Prime Minister has already said that she is minded to seek an article 50 extension. I fail to see what the emergency he is claiming is, considering that his Bill is completely and utterly unnecessary.

Sir Oliver Letwin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remark that he was listening carefully to what I said. In the preceding section of what I was saying, I explained the reason for the Bill, which is to provide a transparent means of ensuring that the precise details of the extension that the Government seek are brought before the House. That would have been necessary anyway. My view is that it would be a good proceeding for our Parliament to have the opportunity to scrutinise and debate the extension proposed by the Government. I am now explaining not why it is an emergency but why it is a quick process. The reason for it being a quick process is that, if we believe it to be a necessary one, it would obviously be redundant if done after the event to which it refers.

Charlie Elphicke: As my right hon. Friend will be aware, the Prime Minister has already sought an article 50 extension. She came to this House to explain it and, to my mind, I cannot see how she has not been transparent already. What extra transparency does he think is necessary that she did not provide with the extension that she has already sought?

Sir Oliver Letwin: That is an instructive example. The last time around, when as my hon. Friend rightly says the Prime Minister sought an extension, in point of fact, she sought a double extension in a sense, because she then brought before the House a statutory instrument which, although not much considered, provided both for 12 April and a later date to be included in the adjusted domestic law, in the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. There was, however, no direct discussion in this House of the validity or otherwise of the period for which she sought the extension. I do not complain about that because, as things then stood and as they stand today before the passage of this business of the House motion and the Bill, if they do pass this House, the Prime Minister has an absolute right to seek those extensions—without consulting anyone, actually. There is absolutely no need for her to do so, because it is a prerogative power. She might feel it necessary to mention something to Her Majesty, but otherwise there is no reason for the Prime Minister to tell anyone.

The Bill will provide for a transparent process not for consultation but for approval by the House of the application that the Prime Minister makes to the EU. I believe, as do others who support the Bill, that that is

appropriate. Of course, one can have an argument about that—my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Charlie Elphicke) might well disagree—but that is the purpose of the Bill, so I do not think one can deny that, from my point of view or that of someone who shares it, the Bill is therefore necessary.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): My right hon. Friend made an assertion just now about the law relating to the prerogative. He may recall the Gina Miller case and the great deal of powerful evidence to suggest that he is fundamentally wrong on that very question. Will he accept the fact that there are those who have a very different view?

Sir Oliver Letwin: The idea that after all these years of many charming conversations with my hon. Friend that I would not accept that he might often have a very different view from mine is of course fanciful. I entirely accept that he might have a very different view from mine—he very probably would do.

On this particular point, I do not think that the Gina Miller case is relevant, because the decision by the Supreme Court in that case was in essence based on the question of individual rights. The argument, whether right or wrong, was that in invoking article 50 there was an attempt to use the prerogative power in a way that the Supreme Court believed would arguably deprive individuals of rights. No one can argue that seeking an extension of the existing position, which is that we are in the EU, deprives anyone of their rights. I therefore very much doubt that the Gina Miller case could be used as a means of injunction the Government to seek parliamentary approval.

In this case, in any event, we have empirical proof. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dover pointed out, the Prime Minister has already sought an extension, and she did that quite properly without asking the approval of the House of Commons. Therefore, she and the Government lawyers on this occasion obviously agree with me. I accept that my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) might well be right and the Government lawyers wrong, but at least I have some backing on the matter.

Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): I am worried about the process we are debating. My right hon. Friend knows that I concern myself with process and, indeed many times in government I fought his corner on process, unbeknown to him. The last time that we took such a controversial Bill through the House so quickly was actually on the day when he became the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The Data Retention and Investigatory Powers Bill went through almost equally quickly with equally strong, powerful arguments. The hon. Member for West Bromwich East (Tom Watson), now the deputy leader of the Labour party, and I spent nearly a year and a half in court challenging the quality of the decision on that Bill. We won and in effect had it struck down. Does my right hon. Friend not worry about the quality of what he is doing today?

Sir Oliver Letwin: In a word, no. That piece of legislation was a serious one with effects on a wide range of our citizens so, good or bad, my right hon.

[*Sir Oliver Letwin*]

Friend did indeed conduct an enormously impressive campaign at a time when he was an outrider of the sort that I have found myself, in an unaccustomed way, forced into being in the past few months. He was highly successful at it. This is a very different kind of Bill, because all it does—as the House will see when we come to consider it—is to enjoin Ministers to put propositions to Parliament. I do not think that that can possibly be regarded as a very dangerous or controversial activity. It might be one that some of my hon. Friends do not wish to see happen—a perfectly legitimate political dispute—but it is not a case in which in the interstices of the law lie questions of freedom.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Sir Oliver Letwin: I will of course give way in all cases, but I will start in good order with my hon. Friend the Member for St Albans (Mrs Main).

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): I share the concerns of my right hon. Friend the Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis) about the speed with which this has come about and the lack of scrutiny. In particular, I am concerned about something that was part of the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) just now—I will raise it in my amendment, if I am allowed to move it tonight. The Bill that he is trying to rush through the House simply asks the Prime Minister to seek an extension; it does not ask her to bring an extension back or to agree an extension, and it does not require her to refuse an extension. I am concerned that deals done behind closed doors in the EU might not come back before this House, which might be a result that my right hon. Friend does not anticipate. I believe that the flaw in the Bill that he is trying to put through is that it sends off a Prime Minister who has the absolute right of her office to decide to do things, but it does not mandate her to bring back to this House anything that she is offered. I cannot think that that is what he intends.

Sir Oliver Letwin: Mr Speaker, you will rule if I move out of order, of course, but the point that my hon. Friend is making is about the Bill. In section 1(6) and (7) of the Bill, if I recall that correctly, there is a requirement for the Government to bring back what the EU asks it to do, but that matter is probably better debated as part of the debate on the Bill, because it is not a question of the business of the House motion. In response to her, however, I want to repeat that the lack of scrutiny of which she complains arises from the fact that, unfortunately, in the absence of an extension request, this country leaves the EU on Thursday next—a point that she and others of my hon. Friends have often made, and rightly. We do not have the choice between a long look at the Bill and no look at the Bill; we only have the choice between a short look at the Bill and no look at the Bill. She prefers no look; I prefer a short look. Those are the only two options.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): My worry about expending this time today is that the only proper thing that the House can debate and influence is whether we ask for an extension. We know that the Prime Minister

wishes to ask for one. He, however, indicated that he would want the Bill to be amended or developed so that the House may express its view on what the length of the extension had to be. We know that last time the Prime Minister asked for an extension to 30 June, but she got one to 12 April. Once we have asked for an extension, it is the EU's decision. This House, for all its mighty powers, has no ability to legislate for what the EU should do.

Sir Oliver Letwin: My right hon. Friend tempts me to stray into the particulars of the Bill, but I was not suggesting that it should be developed to have the effect that he describes; it already has that effect. The Bill provides for the House, upon the Prime Minister putting forward a motion about the length of the extension, to determine whether it wishes to amend that length, and then provides for her to seek the approval of the House for whatever she comes back with from the EU. There are issues about whether this is the best drafting, but they can be considered in the Lords stages of the Bill if the Government so wish. We had productive discussions with the Government this very morning about their views on whether more flexibility should be built in. We are very open to that—I think I can speak for my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford on that—but at the moment, the Bill does exactly what I described, and not what my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) described.

Mr Adrian Bailey (West Bromwich West) (Lab/Co-op): I thank the right hon. Gentleman and Labour colleagues for their work on the Bill. Given our proximity to crashing out with a no-deal Brexit, which could have devastating consequences for our industry, and particularly manufacturing industry, does he agree that the Bill reassures business and underlines to it that we have the maximum possible process for preventing that?

Hon. Members: No.

Sir Oliver Letwin: As the hon. Member for West Bromwich West (Mr Bailey) will have heard, some of my hon. Friends are saying no. My answer is, on the contrary, yes; I agree with him about that.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): I am grateful to my neighbour for giving way. If I might quote him, he has just said that the problem is that if his Bill does not get through tonight, “we leave the EU in a few days’ time.” Is that not what 17.4 million people in this country instructed us to do, and expect us to do? The Bill does nothing but prevent that.

Sir Oliver Letwin: I know that my hon. Friend and neighbour, who is an admirable constituency MP, holds that very strong view. As he knows, I do not share it. Those 17.4 million people mandated us to leave the EU, and I am entirely aligned with the Prime Minister in believing that we have a solemn duty to fulfil that mandate. My hon. Friend interprets that mandate as meaning that we should leave with no deal just over a week from now. I do not, and I do not believe that a large proportion of the 17.4 million people do, either—or would do, once they saw the results. However, that is a

matter of dispute between us that does not have anything to do with the business of the House motion, to which I shall return.

Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) (Lab): I have in the past shared platforms with the right hon. Gentleman on issues that had nothing to do with the EU; they had to do with playing fields. He is a very experienced Member. Does he not have any genuine concern about the speed with which the Bill is going through Parliament, and does he not think that people watching our proceedings, many of whom know that this is a remain Parliament, will see the Bill, and particularly the speed with which it is being pushed through Parliament, as just another little legal way of trying to delay or stop Brexit?

Sir Oliver Letwin: I promised myself at the very beginning of this process—going right back to the referendum campaign and beyond—never to deny the truth about these things, even when it was inconvenient. If the hon. Lady has asked, as I think she has, whether some people see things in that light, I have to answer that some do, and that is a misfortune. If she also asks, as I think she does, whether I regret that this is being done at high speed, the only honest answer is yes; I do regret that. Unfortunately, it can only be done at high speed, because there is no time left. I also very much regret that.

In fact, on the subject of the chain of regrets that I have to admit to the hon. Lady, who I think is my constituency MP in London, I have to say that my biggest regret is that my right hon. Friend for—*[Interruption.]* Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford; thank you, Mr Speaker—and I decided some weeks ago not to pursue an admirable previous Bill, the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 4) Bill, if I remember correctly, which would have had the same effect but could have been considered at more length. Perhaps I was more responsible for that decision than she was. That was, I think, an error on my part. It arose from the intention and hope that we could work entirely with the Government, who made a series of offers to us about the votes that would be held, and which were indeed held. I felt—I think we joined in feeling this, partly because I persuaded my right hon. Friend to join me in this—that it was sensible in the circumstances not to pursue that Bill. That is not an error that I will make again, and that is why I have moved the business of the House motion.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Sir Oliver Letwin: I will give way to the leader of the Green party, and then perhaps I should make some progress.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way, and thank him for his work on the Bill. If ever there was a time to justify looking at a Bill swiftly, surely this is it, when we are on a cliff edge, about to fall out of the EU, which is not what 17.4 million people voted for. Does he agree that, as Bills go, this is pretty straightforward? It is not complex. It is a vital insurance policy that is needed just in case all these other processes, not least the discussions going on between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, fail.

Sir Oliver Letwin: The hon. Lady puts it very well indeed. I agree with her about all of that. She is right that the business of the House motion describes a process for a Bill that is, to all intents and purposes, one clause long, aside from some interpretive provisions. It is not a complicated Bill; everyone in the House, on reading it, would understand it in a matter of seconds. Essentially, it is a binary decision as to whether we accept it or not. Of course amendments may be proposed; we will have plenty of time to vote on those. I do not see that there is any mischief in getting the Bill through Parliament quickly. It is always better, if one has the time, to consider things at greater length, but we do not have the time.

Martin Whitfield (East Lothian) (Lab): May I draw the right hon. Gentleman back to the business motion, and progress it? I seek his confirmation that the purpose of paragraph (1)(d) is to avoid any attempt at making today's business be heard in private, so that all that is happening can be shared with those who want to watch and read it later.

Sir Oliver Letwin: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for bringing us back to the business of the House motion, which has not had much of an airing yet. The paragraph to which he refers is one of a large number of provisions in the motion that are collectively designed to ensure that the short time at our disposal is not ill used on procedural devices and dilatory actions, and to ensure that we can spend the time talking about the Bill, rather than whether we should talk about the Bill, whether we should have talked about some other Bill, whether we should talk about it on some other day, whether we should sit in private, whether we should adjourn, or any other matter of not the slightest significance that might be raised to delay our talking about the Bill—by, incidentally, those who may also complain that we do not have enough time to talk about the Bill. I think it is legitimate to close off those things.

I pay enormous tribute to the brilliance and incredible hard work of the Clerks, on which those of us engaged in this have called repeatedly. The quality of their advice, and their sustained effort, is beyond compare. It is a really remarkable performance by the highest class of professional.

I shall mention briefly the other features of the motion. As well as provisions on timing, which take us up to paragraph (8), the motion provides for the House of Lords to bring back messages, should it seek to amend the Bill. In fact, unless the Government choose to move amendments today on the detail, in order to increase the Government's flexibility, we will need, I think, to accept some amendments from the House of Lords—a punctilious House that will, I am sure, want to tighten the Bill. Paragraphs (9) to (12) allow that to happen in an expeditious way, and are otherwise uncontroversial, as is paragraph (13).

Charlie Elphicke: The whole House can see that my right hon. Friend has given himself the style, if not the title, of leader of this House in his actions today, but what is his plan for making sure that his Bill, should it pass through this House, is discussed in the House of Lords, and that any messages are further debated in that House?

Sir Oliver Letwin: The proceedings of the House of Lords are of course a matter for the House of Lords and not for the House of Commons, and vice versa. It would therefore be an impertinence for me or any other hon. Member to seek to determine how the House of Lords goes about its proceedings. My hon. Friend can rest assured—although this may not be of any comfort to him—that those of us who are promoting this course of action have taken the trouble to identify Members of the House of Lords who are well able to carry the Bill forward in the House of Lords.

My hon. Friend may also wish to know, although I fear that it will also be of no comfort to him, that there is overwhelming support in the House of Lords for this measure, and that we therefore anticipate that it will, in all probability—although obviously nothing can be guaranteed—pass through the House of Lords very rapidly. To that end, the House of Lords has in fact already passed a motion that provides for the expeditious consideration of exactly this form of Bill.

Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): I think that my right hon. Friend said earlier that the British people were against a WTO arrangement, but the latest opinion polls that I have seen—certainly in my constituency—say that more British people are actually in favour of a WTO exit. What is his message to those millions of Britons who do believe in a WTO Brexit?

Mr Speaker: Order. That is an extraordinarily interesting point from the hon. Gentleman, but it suffers from the disadvantage that it does not in any way relate to the business of the House motion on which we are now focusing.

Sir Oliver Letwin: I therefore will not dilate on the subject, but let me just say that I did not say anything about a WTO exit. There could well be circumstances under which people were in favour of a WTO exit. What we are discussing is the question whether it would be appropriate for the UK to leave the EU next Thursday without a deal, which is a wholly different matter.

Paragraphs (14) to (18) of the motion simply prevent the mischief of the Bill being hijacked by anyone other than its promoter. Again, these paragraphs are standard fare in any business of the House motion of this kind, except that they add further provisions against dilatory motions. Some of my hon. Friends—in particular, one right at the end of the Bench, my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg)—are great experts at dilatory motions and are really quite brilliant at them. I hope and expect that, notwithstanding their brilliance, they have in this case been prevented from exercising it.

Sir Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire Dales) (Con): I am intrigued by the word that my right hon. Friend used. Will he be a little more honest with the House? When he says “hijacked”, does he mean that other colleagues might seek to use the same parliamentary practice that he has done today?

Mr Speaker: The right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) is never anything but completely honest. I know that the right hon. Member for Derbyshire Dales (Sir Patrick McLoughlin) used the words loosely

and I am sure that he would not for one moment suggest otherwise, because that would be quite wrong. He said, “a little more honest”. The right hon. Member for West Dorset is always impeccably 100% honest, as is every right hon. and hon. Member in the Chamber.

Sir Patrick McLoughlin: One of the things of which I am absolutely certain is that my right hon. Friend will be able to answer my question. Let me use the word “straightforward”, rather than “honest.”

Hon. Members: Withdraw!

Mr Speaker: The right hon. Member for Derbyshire Dales has clarified his thinking and has used slightly more felicitous language, and I think that the right hon. Member for West Dorset—I do not mean this unkindly—is more than able to cope.

Sir Oliver Letwin: I would never take offence from my right hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire Dales (Sir Patrick McLoughlin), who is a very old friend and colleague. We have been through many things together in Cabinets and shadow Cabinets over many years, and although we disagree about this particular constitutional issue, we agree about much else.

It is of course the case that the Standing Orders of the House of Commons are the possession of the House of Commons. It is therefore the case that, as in all other matters pertaining to the House of Commons, a majority may alter them. If my right hon. Friend is asking me the only question that he can logically ask me under those circumstances—that is, whether a majority of Members of the House of Commons can alter the Standing Orders of the House of Commons at any given time should they wish to do so—the only answer I can give him is the only answer that he could give me as a former Chief Whip, which is yes.

Normally, the Government Chief Whip commands a majority sufficient at all times to ensure that the Executive are able, in effect, to change the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, but this is a very unusual provision of our Parliament. In the United States Congress and many other legislatures, it would be regarded as quite intolerable for the Executive to be able to change the procedures of the House using that kind of whipping, to which we are entirely accustomed. However, it is our method, and if the Government of the day have a sufficient majority to be able to do so, they will be able to exercise that method. On this occasion—not in general, but in relation to this particular set of issues—the Government do not command a majority in all cases, as has been frequently remarked by Members on both sides of the House. They may do tonight or they may not; they have not on some other occasions. Where they do not command a majority, it is open to Members of the House of Commons in the majority to alter the Standing Orders.

Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): There is a danger in the comparative analysis of different constitutions, because of course the United States constitution has a very different method of the separation of powers. As I pointed out in the debate we had on Monday, the President has a legislative veto unless Congress has a two-thirds majority. In any system of

government, there is usually an opportunity for the Executive to veto legislation, and that is what our Standing Order No. 14 effectively provides for, with money resolutions, Queen's consent and that sort of thing. All that is being bypassed in this procedure, which has no mandate or democratic legitimacy from the voters. This is therefore a very questionable process, which is undermining the accountability of how laws are made in this country.

Sir Oliver Letwin: Alas, I think that Brexit will leave behind it a trail of many difficulties for our nation, as we seek to heal the divisions and so on. But I suspect that one of the good things about it is that it will have provoked between my hon. Friend and myself many years of interesting discussion about the evolution of our constitution. My own view is that our constitution is not very well constructed, and does not contain proper checks and balances in a written form in the way in which some better constitutions do. Interestingly, that includes the Basic Law, which we ourselves wrote for the Germans and which is a much better organised constitution; there is not the veto to which my hon. Friend refers, but there are checks and balances through which it would certainly be impossible for the Government to engage in the sort of things that have become usual since 1902—I mistakenly referred to 1906 on a previous occasion—and that have given the Executive too much control over the proceedings of the House of Commons.

Interestingly, some of my hon. and right hon. Friends, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis), have for a very long time argued that the Executive have too much control over the House of Commons. It is just that, on this particular occasion, he would like the Executive to have more control—or would have liked the Executive to have more control before yesterday, in any case. I rather think that people's views on this constitutional matter are currently being overly influenced by their view of what the desirable result is, and I admit entirely that mine are too.

I do not think that this is a minor constitutional wrangle. We could go on happily having this discussion for some years, and ought to in a proper way. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mr Walker), the Chair of the Procedure Committee, will want to inaugurate proper discussions of these things at much greater length. At the moment, this nation faces a very serious issue by anybody's reckoning—those who are in favour of stepping out on Thursday week and those who are against it. We all agree that it is a very important step. The business of the House motion provides for a Bill that has the effect of making it not possible for a Prime Minister to take that step without coming to the House, proposing an extension and trying to obtain an extension approved by the House from the EU. That is the importance of it, and I think that it is actually very important.

Ms Nadine Dorries (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con): I am desperately fond of my right hon. Friend and I apologise to him for what I am about to say. He is a previous member of this Executive and a fixer for the Government over a long period, and has on many occasions taken advantage of the fact that there were not necessarily all the checks and balances that he needed to be in place in order to move legislation that he wanted to move in the

House. Is there therefore not a slight whiff of hypocrisy that he is now lamenting the lack of those checks and balances? And is not this tiny emergency Bill, without time for proper scrutiny, just here to thwart the process of Brexit?

Nick Boles (Grantham and Stamford) (Ind): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Is the phrase “slight whiff of hypocrisy”, when it is implied that it is coming from the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), in order? I am sure that you will be able to advise me.

Mr Speaker: I was diverted by a former Deputy Leader of the House, who was perfectly legitimately whispering into my ear, as colleagues often do when there is a matter of great moment in their minds, and therefore I did not hear it. I am not disputing what the hon. Gentleman has said—

Ms Dorries: I am happy to repeat it.

Mr Speaker: No, there is no requirement for repetition by the hon. Lady. I think that she was making what I would call a political charge. I find it unimaginable that she would make an accusation of personal dishonour against the right hon. Member for West Dorset. If she were to make such a charge, I feel sure that she would be in a minority of one.

Ms Dorries indicated dissent.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Lady shakes her head, and that satisfies me. I think that we will leave it there.

Mr Charles Walker (Broxbourne) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The order of the day is brevity. I say that very gently to my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), who has now been speaking for 35 minutes.

Mr Speaker: That is true, although, in fairness to the right hon. Gentleman, he has been solicitous at every turn in taking interventions from colleagues, the effect of which, as they know, has been to lengthen his oration. I call the right hon. Gentleman to respond to the intervention from the hon. Member for Mid Bedfordshire (Ms Dorries).

Sir Oliver Letwin: I will respond, and then I shall resume my seat, in deference to—

Several hon. Members rose—

Sir Oliver Letwin: I am sorry. I will take one more intervention, from the former leader of my party, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith), whom I could not possibly deny, and then I shall resume my seat, in deference to the Chair of the Procedure Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne.

It is perfectly true that Governments of all hues have used their power when they have a significant majority to move things through the House in ways that would not be possible without a majority. I do not complain about Governments doing that when they have that

[*Sir Oliver Letwin*]

capacity, but neither should Governments complain about the House taking control of its own Order Paper when they lack a majority. The reason the Government lack a majority in this case is that various hon. Friends were unwilling to back their deal, which I have repeatedly voted for, which would have avoided the need for all this.

Ms Dorries: As did I.

Sir Oliver Letwin: I am well aware that my hon. Friend did, and I welcomed her arrival in the Lobby. I am just pointing out that it was not me who designed an arrangement that meant it was necessary to take these actions.

Sir William Cash *rose*—

Sir Oliver Letwin: I am terribly sorry, but I will not give way, because I have promised to give way to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green and then to sit down.

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, with whom I served in government for a positive period of time. I gently chide him on his previous comments about colleagues changing their minds. He knows very well that we all change our minds when we are in government, because we curse the very fact that we are delayed by the Speaker for urgent questions—you were one of those too, Mr Speaker. Now that we are here, we all praise the Speaker because we are not in government and we think it is an excellent idea. You were with me on that as well, Mr Speaker. I say gently that it never does to criticise colleagues for changing their minds. I think it is a habitual point in this House that we somehow forget what we said before.

On my right hon. Friend's motion, I am little confused about how he thinks this procedure will follow from the House of Lords. I think he expects it to take precedence over everything else. Does he anticipate that this House might reject some amendments and, if so, how does he see this happening the second time around? Would it still have the same precedence?

Sir Oliver Letwin: The answer is yes it would, but I do not anticipate that that is at all likely. My sense, for what it is worth, is that although the House of Lords procedures are arcane and it is impossible to determine from the outside the time that will be taken, there is very substantial support for the Bill there, and it is therefore very unlikely that anything other than technical amendments, which might be wholly welcome, would come back, and they would therefore be accepted. I do not think that is an issue we need face.

I apologise for going on for so long. I have tried to answer the points that have been made and shall now sit down.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I should inform the House that if the business of the House motion passes, amendments and new clauses may be accepted by the Clerks at the

Table before the Bill has been read a Second time. This must be done in the Chamber only, not in any of the Clerks' offices. However, it would be helpful if Members intending to table such amendments and new clauses shared them electronically with the Public Bill Office. In order to produce an amendment paper as soon as possible after amendments and new clauses are tabled, the Chairman of Ways and Means has decided that only the first six names for each amendment or new clause will be published. However, a full list of all names will be produced as soon as possible and made available in the Vote Office.

2.34 pm

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): May I start by thanking the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) for moving the Business of the House motion to enable the Bill to be considered? I thank him and my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) for enabling the Bill to be debated.

It is this Government who have created the Brexit deadlock, and the Bill seeks to get things moving. The people and their democratically elected representatives in Parliament want to make progress. When someone such as the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles), who was an outstanding Minister and played a leading role in ensuring the introduction of equal marriage, decides to sit as an independent, we are in interesting and difficult times.

It is this Government who have put us in this position. Their red lines were drawn right at the beginning and formed the boundaries for the negotiations. In her Lancaster House speech on 17 January 2017, the Prime Minister set out the Government's plan for Britain and the 12 priorities that they would use to negotiate Brexit, but there was a lack of information and Parliament was bypassed and ignored until we in the Opposition ensured that there was a meaningful vote.

As hon. Members have said, 17 million people voted to leave the EU. The Government have failed to represent them and they have failed to represent the nearly 16 million people who voted to remain. More importantly, there are many young people—we do this not for us but for the next generation—who did not have a chance to have their voices heard in 2016 but who are now able to vote.

It is right that Parliament has tried a new process of indicative votes as a means of testing the will of the House of Commons on different options relating to one issue. The Bill seeks to run in parallel with that process and create a legal mechanism whereby the House can instruct the Prime Minister to ask the European Council for an extension to article 50. We know that these are unusual times and that we are in a hung Parliament, and that the Government are governing on the basis of confidence and supply and nothing else. Back Benchers from across the House want the Bill to be debated.

In her statement from No. 10 yesterday, the Prime Minister announced that she intends to seek a further extension to article 50, but there are no details about how the decision will be made, including on the length of the extension or what will happen if the European Council puts forward an alternative. The Prime Minister did not explicitly rule out leaving the EU with no deal

yesterday, so it is right that the House can have a say on an extension to article 50, which would avoid the UK crashing out without a deal.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con): I just wonder whether the hon. Lady is concerned about the process being used today, because the convention is that emergency legislation passed in one day has the consent of the whole House before it is brought forward. Is there not a risk that if this is good enough for today, a future Government with a large majority, of whichever party, might conclude that this is the way to legislate? The conventions and customs of the House are a protection of our constitution and ensure that the rights of minorities are respected and reserved, so is there not a risk that this tramples on that in a way that others will learn from in future?

Valerie Vaz: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. The Clerks of the House would not let through any process or procedure that was not acceptable, and I believe that this is acceptable.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend agree that the customs and conventions of the House have already been trampled on by this Government, who have stopped participating in and voting on Opposition days, redefined a Session as two years long and given the Opposition less time? They have trampled on quite a few bits of our unwritten constitution, and yet this business motion seeks to use the existing powers of the House in its Standing Orders to do something that Parliament clearly wants, which is to prevent this Government from plunging us over a cliff into no-deal chaos.

Valerie Vaz: Yes, and I pay tribute to my hon. Friend, who is a former shadow Leader of the House. She is right. She has heard me ask at business questions a number of times for Opposition days, to which we are entitled, and we have debated the fact that the Government decided to rig Select Committees and other Committees by giving themselves a majority on them.

Sir William Cash: A great number of constitutional Bills have been examined by the Clerks and others in relation to matters of this character. Would the hon. Lady be good enough to give us examples of comparisons of different kinds of Bills, or would she be glad to wait for me to explain it a bit later?

Valerie Vaz: I think we can wait for the hon. Gentleman's lecture later.

The motion allows for the Bill to be considered and asks the Prime Minister to make a proposal to be considered by the House the day after enactment. As with every Bill, a helpful explanatory note to the Bill is available in the Vote Office that describes each clause and exactly what the Prime Minister has to do.

Charlie Elphicke: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Valerie Vaz: I am nearly finished.

We are trying to help the Government. I am pleased that the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) has been selected. Her Majesty's Opposition support the motion and want to find a way forward. Our democracy demands it.

2.41 pm

The Leader of the House of Commons (Andrea Leadsom): I will keep my remarks brief. The Government regret the position that Parliament is in today. This motion not only challenges again our constitutional conventions but offers Parliament hardly any time to consider, let alone debate, the legislation. The people of the United Kingdom rightly expect our democracy to be upheld at all times and for our democratic institutions to take their responsibilities seriously.

Last night, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister set out the Government's approach to next steps, including that we will need to seek an extension to article 50—one that is as short as possible and avoids the need to fight the European parliamentary elections, which, nearly three years after the referendum, would be unacceptable. She also set out the Government's next steps to leave the EU in a way that can command support from a majority of parliamentarians. In that context, I question why this legislation is necessary.

Sir Robert Syms (Poole) (Con): My right hon. Friend is making a good case. Does not my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) give us an excellent precedent for the Government putting business through in one day in the future? If the Opposition are happy with that for this proposition, why should they not be happy with that for any future proposition from the Government?

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend sets out clearly the dilemma today. The precedent of many years of parliamentary convention is being broken and will therefore no longer be a precedent, and others may well seek to do this in the future. The Government have consistently said that we do not support the unprecedented removal of Government control of the Order Paper, no matter the circumstances. For many years, the convention has been that it is for the Government, with the confidence of the House, to set out the business, and it is for Parliament to scrutinise, amend and reject or approve.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): Could the Leader of the House explain what is not in order about today's business?

Andrea Leadsom: What is in order about today's business is entirely a matter for the Chair. The point I am making is that it breaks many years of precedent, whereby the Government of the day, with the confidence of the House, determine the business of the day, and then parliamentarians scrutinise, amend and reject or approve.

Sir William Cash: Many people who have had a chance to look at this Bill have noticed that it is completely shambolic and extremely badly drafted. We will be moving on to consideration of amendments in this very truncated and, in my view, completely reprehensible procedure. Grouping of amendments will be necessary in the circumstances, which means that many important amendments—even those intending to improve the Bill—will simply neither be reached nor passed. Is that not an indictment of the manner in which this entire process is being carried on by my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset?

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend is a genuine expert in procedure and how best to improve a Bill, and he is right; there is no time for any of the usual niceties.

As Members will know, my job as Leader of the House is to ensure, before introducing any Government legislation, that it has been considered carefully from all angles by the Parliamentary Business and Legislation Committee, which I chair. It is also my job to ensure that legislation is given adequate time for scrutiny and consideration by the House.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: Traditionally, when legislation is rushed through this House, the other place gives consideration that has not been given. What measures will the Government take to ensure that there is proper and detailed consideration of the Bill in the other place?

Andrea Leadsom: As my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset said, it will be a matter for the other place, and the Government will have no involvement in that whatsoever, so I am afraid that I am unable to answer that question.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Andrea Leadsom: I will not take any more interventions. I have taken a few, and this really is a matter for Parliament.

While the Bill is a short piece of legislation, as Members know, it has far-reaching implications for an international negotiation that is subject to unanimous agreement with the EU27. I remind Members that the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act 2017 had just two clauses but was debated for five full days in this Chamber. It therefore seems inconceivable that Parliament only saw the Bill under consideration today for the first time yesterday and will have just a few hours of debate this evening. As a result of my grave concerns about the conventions that are being undermined today, the Government will oppose this business of the House motion.

2.47 pm

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): It is a pleasure, as always, to follow the Leader of the House. She has made her intentions clear when it comes to the business motion, but perhaps she could clear something up for us. There are rumours in the press that the Government may be tempted to support the Bill as a means of progressing some sort of extension. She was not taking many interventions, but she could shake her head or nod to signal whether that is something the Government are thinking about. She is sitting still; we can come to our own conclusions about that.

I very much welcome today as another great innovation for Parliament. Precedents are there to be established, and again we are doing that in this House. I am proud of this House today and the fact that we are embarking on this journey. This is something new, and precedents are there to be created. What surprises me is that the hon. Gentlemen—it is nearly all hon. Gentlemen today—sitting on the Government Benches are the great “take back controllers”, but when this House demonstrates that very thing, they are the ones who object to it most.

Mr Duncan Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir William Cash *rose*—

Pete Wishart: I will take both interventions, because I will enjoy them.

Mr Duncan Smith: I am genuinely grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I ask him this simple question. He has complained throughout this Parliament and the long time he has been here that, since the Blair Government brought in programme motions, Governments have cut and curtailed time for debate—he finds that reprehensible, and I agree with him. So why, when a Bill is introduced with such a tight timetable, does he not think that that creates an excellent precedent for the Government to use again and again? Will he complain about that in future?

Pete Wishart: What attracts me to this particular motion today is that Parliament is doing this. For the first time, Parliament is actually defining, creating and progressing a Bill through this House. That is an exciting prospect, and I did not think the right hon. Gentleman would be so churlish as not to enjoy that, as somebody who really enjoys such events.

Sir William Cash: I was intrigued by the hon. Gentleman's reference to taking back control because, of course, what actually happened is that the referendum Act, by 6:1 in this House, gave the decision to the British people—that is what the vote was about—and they also voted incessantly, and rightly, for a whole series of enactments. In fact, the sovereignty of this Parliament has been preserved, but it was given to the people so that they could make the decision, and now Parliament is trying to take it back again.

Pete Wishart: I love this—this is really good stuff and entertaining. So taking back control is qualified; it is taking back control as long as it is the hon. Gentleman's control. This is how these things become particular issues for him.

Ms Dorries: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's words about taking back control and his passion for Parliament, but does he not accept that people watching what is going on with this Bill today will just see it as another means to obfuscate, delay and kick the can down the road, not what people expect us to be getting on with here, which is voting for a deal and leaving?

Pete Wishart: I say to the hon. Lady that this is about the only means we have actually to make progress in this House. We are going to get a Bill through the House of Commons, I hope later today, which will allow some sort of way forward so that we will be able to make sure that there is a plan to take forward, because if we do not we are crashing out next Friday, and we have to make sure that does not happen.

Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): My hon. Friend is setting out a very good case. He is talking about precedents, and one of the welcome precedents that I am sure we and others will look to is the fact that this may provide the opportunity for some opposition parties

to progress Bills through the House in Opposition day time. Will he reflect on the opportunities that may arise as a result?

Pete Wishart: Absolutely. My hon. Friend makes a very good point. This does present such a precedent, and I hope all parties across the House will make use of it and ensure that Bills are passed on Opposition days. This is a new way of doing things that should be looked on positively. I am really very surprised that the “take back controllers” cannot see the opportunities presented to this House to, in effect, take back control in this Parliament.

Doing this with a Bill for the first time ever is really interesting. I have to say to the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) that I think there are deficiencies in the Bill. Earlier, I called it a bit of a dog’s breakfast, but it is the only meal on the menu, so we have to take advantage of the opportunity that has been presented. What it does is ensure that we do not leave next week without a deal. It attempts to ensure that there is at least some sort of way forward in trying to renegotiate with Europe, and it will oblige the Prime Minister to come back and give updates about the progress she is making.

I think the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) said, absolutely correctly, that if we do not do this we will have to leave it to the Prime Minister and take it on trust. What we have seen from this Government already is that they contemptuously ignore outcomes in this House repeatedly, and again and again. All of a sudden, however, we are supposed to trust them with the process of doing what they say they are going to do.

Charlie Elphicke: The hon. Gentleman says we would have to leave this as a matter of trust to the Prime Minister. The reality is that, if he had actually bothered to read it, he would see that the Bill simply makes a request to her, and she could completely ignore it. That is why this Bill is so pointless, and why it is an abuse of this House to be using the emergency legislation method. The precedent, which he acknowledges will be created, will be visited most dearly and deeply on Opposition Members when they find themselves seeking time but a Government cite this precedent, which they themselves have adopted, as to why they should not have it.

Pete Wishart: That sounds like some sort of admission that the Conservatives are on their way out and they are expecting to change places. God help us if what the hon. Gentleman says was ever actually the case. There are in fact lots of deficiencies in the Bill—I am quite happy to concede that—but what he presented is not one of them. The Bill explicitly mandates the Prime Minister to come back to ensure that there is a statement about any conversations she has with the EU. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman should perhaps read the Bill before he intervenes again.

This is a day for precedent, isn’t it? As another part of the breakthrough in the Brexit process, we now have the Prime Minister sitting down exclusively with the Leader of the Opposition. This idea to try to share Brexit with the Opposition is a huge elephant trap that has been set for the Leader of the Opposition, and he has gone wandering into it with his size 12 shoes, like some sort of hairy mammoth. That is exactly what the Opposition

are doing today, and it will be fascinating. Today, remainder meets leaver across the table to discuss Brexit—a remainder whose party is a bunch of leavers and a leaver whose party is a bunch of remainers—so this will be fascinating. We are looking forward to the outcome of this particular meeting, and I think the whole House will be thoroughly entertained by the outcome. For Scottish National party Members, this looks a bit like Better Together 2.0: the sequel. Here are Labour and the Conservatives sitting down to conspire to take Scotland out of Europe against its will. That is exactly what will be done, or it looks very much like that to us on these Benches.

Richard Benyon (Newbury) (Con): Is it possible to know the hon. Gentleman’s views on the programme motion, which is what we are debating now?

Pete Wishart: If I may gently correct the right hon. Gentleman, it is actually a business motion, not a programme motion, and I am speaking to the business motion. I do not know who informs the Tories, but I think they need the Whip’s note to be passed around to ensure they are actually asking the right questions, because a few of them have come up very short today. However, I always enjoy the entertainment with the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues.

We will support this business motion today. We know the Government are going to oppose it. What is intriguing is what they are going to do beyond that, because they may very well be supporting the Boles motion—

Mr Rees-Mogg: I think the hon. Gentleman is in danger of confusing the House. He ticked off my right hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Richard Benyon) for calling this a programme motion, saying it is a business motion, but now he seems to be going back in the other direction, so I am not clear.

Pete Wishart: Talking about going in another direction, the hon. Gentleman is heading us back to the 18th century. What we have missed in the proceedings today is a history lesson, with the Tudors, the Barebones Parliament and so on. We will miss having a history lesson today, but perhaps we will have it later.

Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman has made it very clear that he does not trust the Prime Minister and he does not trust the Leader of the Opposition. At the next available opportunity, will he give the people the chance to have their say, and trust them?

Pete Wishart: I have already learned from the conversation today that the Leader of the Opposition is not prepared to push this as an option, as with freedom of movement. That is an absolute and utter disgrace, and a betrayal of everybody in Scotland. We shall await very keenly the outcome of today’s motion. We will back this today, and we will be backing the Bill later this afternoon. We are intrigued to see what the Government do, but I hope that this unusual bit of parliamentary procedure—this new precedent—will be enjoyed and appreciated by everybody across this House.

2.57 pm

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I intend to be very brief. I rise to explain why I will oppose this motion, in line with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, who spoke for the Government.

[*Mr Iain Duncan Smith*]

I think the biggest danger here is that a precedent is being set. I am not by any means the oldest Member in the House—I simply chide the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart), who spoke from the SNP Benches—but I recall that when I first came here that it was always a requirement for every Bill to have 100 hours in Committee before the Government were allowed to bring it back to the Floor of the House with any kind of guillotine. Debate and scrutiny took place in Committee, or on the Floor of the House for that matter, at great length, as many of my right hon. and hon. Friends will remember. I think the quality of our examination of Bills was infinitely better than what followed under the subsequent Labour Government, who introduced programme motions on Bills immediately. That has meant that this House has fallen into disrepute for its inability properly to scrutinise legislation in the way it should.

We now dump everything in the other place and say blithely, as my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) said earlier—I say quite genuinely that he is a good friend—things will go to the Lords and, of course, we expect the Lords to tidy it up. However, we are the elected Chamber: the public have elected us to come here to hold the Government to account. We constantly say that we are here to hold the Government to account, and then we blithely say that we will let the Lords do it for us when they get the chance and that we will think about it later on.

Sir Oliver Letwin *rose*—

Mr Duncan Smith: I was not going to give way, because my right hon. Friend told us that we were speaking for too long, but I will give way to him.

Sir Oliver Letwin: I certainly would never accuse my right hon. Friend of speaking for too long; it was others who advised me that I was speaking for too long. I just say to him and other Members present that we are aware of the issues the Government have with the details. We have discussed with the Government, at their request, changes that would accommodate those concerns. We expressed our total willingness to include those amendments at this stage in the Commons; the Government, so far at any rate, have not come forward with those. That is why that would have to be in the Lords; I would far prefer if it were done today.

Mr Duncan Smith: I am happy to accept my right hon. Friend's explanation for some of the rationale behind this, but if he will forgive me, I do not speak for the Government—to be fair, I have not done so for a little while, since I resigned, in case he had forgotten. I will try to speak for what I think it is like to be in opposition. I always think that Oppositions should be careful about what they wish for when they are going to be in government, because Oppositions fall upon all these mechanisms in this place. Delaying Bills is part of the reasonable rationale of an Opposition to force the Government to think again. These devices, once swept away at short notice, are swept away for good and for ill.

Mrs Main *rose*—

Mr Duncan Smith: I will give way briefly, because I intend to finish fairly shortly.

Mrs Main: I absolutely sympathise with the sentiments that my right hon. Friend is expressing. Did he note that our right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) also said that this was not the world's best drafted Bill, but that there was not enough time and that the House of Lords would expedite it, because he had already talked to a few people there who were going to proceed in a fashion that meant it would come back here quickly? The rush associated with this is absolutely appalling.

Mr Duncan Smith: I think it is—I agree with my hon. Friend—but more important is the precedent being set. I worry that future Governments, of whichever persuasion, will reference this device and frequently conclude that time must be curtailed because it is their right to do so.

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind) *rose*—

Mr Duncan Smith: I will give way, but I feel very bad because I was going to conclude.

Lady Hermon: I urge the right hon. Gentleman not to feel bad about it. I also remind Members that the Northern Ireland Office has developed quite a habit of using the emergency procedure to take through Northern Ireland legislation in all its stages in one day in this House. We have had the Northern Ireland budget taken through in all its stages not just once but twice, when it was not an emergency, along with the regional rate and energy tariffs in Northern Ireland, so the right hon. Gentleman should please not use the argument that what we are doing today is setting a precedent. The Northern Ireland Office and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland have already set that precedent.

Mr Duncan Smith: I recognise that, and I think that procedure should never be used, except in absolute extremis. I agree with the hon. Lady. As someone who once served in Northern Ireland, I have to say that if we legislate in haste, we will repent at leisure, and we do nothing in this place but repent at leisure again and again. The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and all these other things that we said were emergencies were never properly scrutinised, and it is the scrutiny of this place that should matter above all else.

We talk about sweeping away precedents because they are archaic and were around for 200 years or whatever, and that everything modern must be brilliant. I do not agree with that. I think that sometimes history teaches endless lessons. This place is at its best when it is arguing and debating, and taking its time to do so. Other legislatures around the world, such as the Senate, which has no time limits, spend a lot of time looking at Bills and legislation. We do away with that at our peril.

Mr Rees-Mogg *rose*—

Mr Duncan Smith: If it is urgent, I will give way; then I will conclude.

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, because he has made all the points that I want to make, so I do not now need to speak, except to make one point about the Northern Ireland legislation. That process was done with the consent of both sides of the House before the legislation was brought through. Therefore, there was a consensus in this Chamber that it needed to

be done in that way, which does not exist on this occasion. That is a convention of the greatest importance, because now a Government with a majority will feel entitled to use this dangerous process.

Mr Duncan Smith: I agree and I recognise that, but I think that Governments too often use that process, and it occasionally suits Oppositions to agree with them. It is better that we delay and debate. I will conclude with the wise words of my predecessor, now Lord Tebbit. When I first came here, I asked him, “How will I know whether I am right or wrong?” He said, “You’ll be wrong if you’re not speaking and arguing. You’re right if you’re arguing and you’re speaking. That’s what you were sent here for.”

3.4 pm

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): I rise to support the motion, but I want to speak in particular to amendment (a), standing in the name of the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn).

We know that a good majority of Members in this House oppose a no-deal Brexit. In my relatively short time here in Parliament, I have understood our flexibility and that we can, at a pinch, do anything. We can revoke article 50, agree to a people’s vote or, with the motion from the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), ask the EU for a long extension. We will not crash out just by accident. If we do, it will be because of our active consent. It is our choice. I therefore want to address the question of what this House wants. That is the whole purpose of the indicative voting process. *[Interruption.]* If Members will forgive me, I will expand a little on the indicative voting process.

We know that every proposal so far has been defeated, some of them very narrowly. It is also true that neither the customs union nor the people’s vote achieved an overall majority in this House, which would be about 320 votes. It is my belief that we are just halfway through the indicative vote process. Many compelling options have not yet been proposed or voted on. The people’s vote proposal cannot stand alone. A new referendum always needs two choices.

Mr Charles Walker: Is the hon. Lady speaking to the business motion or to the main debate now?

Wera Hobhouse: Maybe the hon. Gentleman was talking—a lot of people were—but I have just indicated that I am talking to amendment (a), because I fear that today will be the last opportunity to talk about indicative votes. That is why I am talking about that now.

What would be on the other half of the ballot paper? It is not for me to say what Brexit choice would be on the ballot paper, but it can clearly be the Prime Minister’s deal, a customs union, a common market 2.0 or no deal. All these individual Brexits have failed to achieve a majority. None of them has been voted on in a combined offer with a people’s vote. Following the indicative votes on Monday, a lot of Members immediately understood that the next indicative voting options would include composite motions—for example, the Prime Minister’s deal plus a people’s vote, or a customs union plus a people’s vote. I worry that today’s agenda is deliberately designed to ensure that such composite motions are never considered by Parliament.

The indicative vote process has been a less divisive and less tribal process for finding a majority position. Testing the Prime Minister’s deal with a people’s vote must be done if indicative votes are to mean anything. There are about 200 Conservative Members who have voted three times for the Prime Minister’s deal, and it is Government policy. Add it to a people’s vote and we leave the EU in the way that the Conservative Government want, subject to the people confirming it.

In the same way, the Labour party has held a double position for six months, both supporting a people’s vote or referendum and wanting a softer Brexit than the Prime Minister. If the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition today come to an agreement about a soft Brexit option, the assumption is that it will pass into law without a people’s vote and we will leave the EU on 22 May. An indicative vote on a Brexit deal plus a people’s vote would force some difficult choices on to many Members in this House.

Today is possibly the last day of Parliament taking control, not because Parliament has finished the indicative vote process, but because the original supporters are now scared of the outcomes. Just when Parliament could reach a majority, or at least try something that could command the support of 400 MPs, the process might be terminated. No wonder people say that our parliamentary democracy is broken.

Where to go now for at least 50% of the British people who want to stay in the European Union? Where to go now for the 1 million people on the “Put it to the People” march 10 days ago? Where to go now for the 6 million people who signed the petition to revoke article 50? At least 50% of the population are represented in Parliament by only about 10% of MPs. That is why our democracy is broken. I hope very much that the indicative votes process will continue until we have truly tested all options, especially composite motions that combine a Brexit and a people’s vote.

3.9 pm

Mr Charles Walker (Broxbourne) (Con): I will be extremely brief.

First of all, I want to say to my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), who introduced the motion, that what we are debating is not a constitutional outrage, and nor is it an abomination. I want him to be assured of that. I accept fully that Standing Orders belong to the House of Commons. I say to the shadow Leader of the House that she is entirely right to say that the Government are wrong not to divide on Opposition motions. I have said that before as Chairman of the Procedure Committee and I am happy to say it again now as Chairman of the Procedure Committee. I would also say, however, that the Government are entirely right in their construct of Select Committees and Standing Committees. They did not rig the system and I accept that what the Government did was the right decision to make. I said that at the time, as well.

I am, however, concerned about what we are doing today. I am concerned about precedent. I have been involved in such a Bill—I think I sat through all its stages in 2012—which became the Mental Health (Approval Functions) Act 2012. It was a public safety Bill and I understood then why it needed to go through the House very quickly. I wish it had not needed to go through the

[Mr Charles Walker]

House so quickly. That was not an ideal situation, but we were trying to prevent people from harming themselves and, potentially, others.

I do think that the texture—I say this as Chairman of the Procedure Committee, although I am not speaking on behalf of the Procedure Committee—of what we are doing today feels wrong. I cannot put my finger on it, but I think that we, as a House, will regret what we are doing today if the business motion is passed.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): I had the great pleasure of serving with the hon. Gentleman on the Procedure Committee in the previous Parliament. I think it will be for the Procedure Committee to consider this situation, once all of this is finished—if it is ever finished—in more detail and see what lessons can be learned. I hope that when the Committee does that it will look to other Parliaments on these islands, such as the Parliament at Holyrood, which has a Business of the House Committee and allows programming decisions of this kind to be made by consensus across the parties. I hope the Procedure Committee will consider that as a way forward.

Mr Walker: The hon. Gentleman makes an excellent intervention and we shall no doubt ask him to come to the Committee and give evidence to explain himself further.

Mr Speaker, I said I would be brief and I will conclude with this. I think we will regret what we are doing today. It does worry me and I will be voting against the motion. My right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset is a decent, lovely and wonderful man, but there are people in this place who are not decent, wonderful and lovely. I fear that one day soon—I hope it will not be the case—we will be debating an expropriation of assets Bill in six hours. We would regret that bitterly.

3.13 pm

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): I want to speak briefly to amendment (a), which stands in my name and has been selected. In response to the contribution from the hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse), she will note that amendment (a) would give the House, if carried, the opportunity on Monday to engage in a further round of indicative votes.

I note that since I put my amendment down the Prime Minister has become an enthusiastic convert to the notion of indicative votes. In the statement she made from Downing Street, she said, of the process she is now, as we speak, engaging in by talking to the Leader of the Opposition to try to find a way forward, that if we cannot agree on an approach

“we would instead agree a number of options for the future relationship that we could put to the House in a series of votes to determine which course to pursue.”

I think that that was a very significant announcement, because the Government had talked in general terms about giving the House such an opportunity. Although we have had two rounds, since the Government have had three goes for their withdrawal agreement, or part of their withdrawal agreement, it would seem rather churlish of Members not to give the House a further opportunity.

I want to reinforce the point made by the hon. Member for Bath. Looking at the results from last time—the customs union came within three votes of passing and a confirmatory referendum came within 12 votes of passing—there is now an opportunity, given that we are going to have to compromise to try to find a way forward, to see whether Members can come together and combine some of the propositions in the way that she suggested to see whether we can assist in the process the Government are now embarking on in reaching out to the Leader of the Opposition. Monday, if amendment (a) were carried, would give us the opportunity to do so.

Mrs Main: I am so puzzled. Many of the issues the right hon. Gentleman mentions on which we may have to compromise will need the withdrawal agreement, yet only five Labour Members have ever voted for it. Does he not find it funny that there is no compromise on the withdrawal agreement from those on the Labour Benches?

Hilary Benn: I am on record as saying that I do not have a problem with the withdrawal agreement, but I am also on record as having voted against the Government's attempt last week to separate the withdrawal agreement from the political declaration, because they come as one. I cite, as the authority for that argument, the Prime Minister.

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Ind): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that this was always a three-part process? Big progress has been made. Is it his understanding that, now we have begun to conclude the procedure, at least one composite, and arguably two, is now coming forward? There is every chance that we really will be able to settle on something that would reach agreement across the House.

Hilary Benn: I hope very much that that is indeed the case. This has been a new approach for the House. Let us be frank, there was quite a lot of scepticism, first time around, about whether we would get anywhere. I think we have made progress, notwithstanding the fact that none of the motions was able to get a majority. That should hardly be a cause for criticism, since the proposition the Government put to the House, having worked on it for over two years, lost, in sequence, by 230, 149 and 58 votes. I think the House of Commons is slightly nearer to finding a way forward than the Government have managed so far, but that is not an argument for not trying again.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): I am very grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way and we will be supporting his amendment later on. He mentioned the British Government's proposal for a round of indicative votes based on options put forward by the Leader of the Opposition and the British Government. Is he aware of whether the House will be able to amend those options? If not, his amendment is vital as a safety mechanism.

Hilary Benn: The hon. Gentleman makes a really good point, because it was not clear from the Prime Minister's statement yesterday how the propositions, if the two of them are not able to reach agreement, will be constructed and put to the House. Obviously, we will wait with interest to see what may come out of the

discussions taking place today and—who knows?—tomorrow, but it does give the House a chance to interpose in this process. If I were the Leader of the House, I would be enthusiastically supporting amendment (a), because it may well be that votes on Monday will be exactly what is required to take this process forward, whether as a result of something that comes out of the talks or from the House itself.

Mr Duncan Smith: I am genuinely grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, and I hesitate to correct him, but if he thinks back to what he has just said, he will see that he has made a comparison that does not stand. He compared what happened in the indicative votes with the failure of the Government's motion. The Government had to get a majority of the House, and they are 48 short of that, whereas not one of the indicative votes got within whispering distance of a majority of the House. Is the right hon. Gentleman suggesting that if the indicative votes process is brought back, each element should meet the requirement of a majority vote of the House?

Hilary Benn: I was making the much simpler point that none of the propositions has carried. The Prime Minister said in her statement that

“the Government stands ready to abide by the decision of the House.”

That is important. She was referring to the indicative votes that may follow the process that we are currently undertaking. In my view, anything that the House indicates it is prepared to support—the difference is that indicative votes are so called precisely because we ask the House to indicate whether it is prepared to move in a given direction—would have to be considered by the Government. If a proposition were adopted, the Prime Minister would have to go to the European Union and seek to change the political declaration. At that point, it would come back to the House, and the test that the Government rightly set in section 13 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018—the approval of the House for both the political declaration and the withdrawal agreement—would have to be passed.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): The right hon. Gentleman has said that he supports the withdrawal agreement, but he did not vote for it on meaningful vote 3 because of the disaggregation of the withdrawal agreement and the political declaration. Of course, that was not the case in meaningful votes 1 and 2, but he still did not support the withdrawal agreement.

Hilary Benn: No, because in meaningful votes 1 and 2 we voted on the package. My objection, as I have made plain in the House many times, is to the political declaration and the complete lack of certainty that it offers. I do not want to stray from the amendment that I have tabled to the business motion, although the hon. Gentleman tempts me to do so.

After the experience of indicative votes rounds 1 and 2, and given that we are making some progress and that we are all being asked to compromise and see what we might be prepared to support, I suggest it would be timely to have the chance to do so again on Monday. I hope that the House will support my amendment.

3.20 pm

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): I have already made my remarks on the methodology that is being employed in respect of the Bill. I think it is reprehensible. It represents a constitutional revolution, and it sets a very undesirable precedent. My right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) said in his concluding remarks that responsibility for all this somehow lies with those, such as myself, who oppose the withdrawal agreement and related matters. I do not think I am misrepresenting him by saying that, but I think the truth is quite the opposite.

Something of the order of 30 colleagues—I say this with great respect to them, because they are entitled to say and do what they want—are doing something profoundly undemocratic by supporting what my right hon. Friend is trying to achieve, in all its enormity, with this business motion. The precedence that is given in Standing Order No. 14 to Government business is one of the rocks of our parliamentary system. Why? Because we have a system of parliamentary government, and a system of democratic government.

I say in all reasonableness that Standing Order No. 14 gives precedence to Government business for a very simple reason. If a Government are formed because the Queen has agreed that a Prime Minister should take office, it follows that Her Majesty's Government have a majority and/or a sufficient degree of confidence to be able to carry the business of the House. That is the constitutional convention, and that is what our Standing Orders say.

Sandy Martin (Ipswich) (Lab): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir William Cash: No, I will not.

To rip up that convention, which is basically what my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset is doing, is extremely undemocratic and, if I may say so, unparliamentary. It goes to the heart of whether business in this House is conducted in line with the wishes of those who voted either in general elections or, in this case, by virtue of the European Union Referendum Act 2015—the sovereign Act of Parliament that gave the decision to the British people. The business motion and the shenanigans that go with it are an attempt to take back control over that business and give it to Members of Parliament, who have no legitimacy whatsoever to make decisions that they have given, by their own vote in this House—by six to one—to the British people. That is a very simple constitutional point, and I do not think that anybody can dispute it. If anyone wishes to dispute it, will they be kind enough to get up?

Sandy Martin: Does the hon. Gentleman not accept that he is trying to have it both ways? Whether or not we believe that the constitution is currently perfect, which I do not, either the Government are capable of delivering decisions or, if they are incapable of forming a majority and making vital decisions, it is surely incumbent on the Members of Parliament to find ways to do so.

Sir William Cash: I could not disagree more, because the manner in which this is being done involves legislating in circumstances that will mean, as I said yesterday on a point of order, Mr Speaker, that all these arrangements are rammed through. There will be no practical opportunity

[*Sir William Cash*]

today to make amendments and to get them tabled, discussed and voted on, because of the grouping system that we have under our procedures.

I say to the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) that the fact is that this is a shambolic Bill. A number of things have to be changed in it. There are references to Acts of Parliament that do not exist and it is alleged that sections are in force when they are not. This Bill is a most unbelievable shambles, and the reality is that there is no excuse for it. Hon. Members have had the previous No. 4 Bill for some time, and they suddenly decided to accelerate this procedure to try to get some kind of political advantage, undermining the decision of the House in the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018—that is, the repeal of the European Communities Act 1972, which is related in turn to exit day. That exit day has been moved back by a statutory instrument. I personally think that it is unlawful, but that is a separate question, not for today. The repeal of the 1972 Act, on which everything depends—including that it is the anchor of the referendum itself—has to go in lockstep with exit day. Moving exit day does not prevent the repeal of the 1972 Act. All I can say is that that has fundamental relevance to what is going on today.

Turning to my next point, the real question is this: who governs this country? That is what Standing Order No. 14 is all about. I notice my hon. Friend the Member for Sandbach having a bit of a laugh there—

Antoinette Sandbach (Eddisbury) (Con) *rose*—

Sir William Cash: Just one moment—if I may, I will finish my initial response. I have to say that there are some difficulties arising on that question. Actually, the Government's business taking precedence under Standing Order No. 14 gives this right to the British people, in line with a majority that does exist.

Mr Speaker: For the avoidance of doubt, I think I am right in stating to the House that Sandbach is a place and indeed, that it is not all that far from where the hon. Lady represents, but she is of course Antoinette Sandbach, the hon. Member for Eddisbury.

Antoinette Sandbach: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) for allowing the intervention, because I had always thought that it was a principle that Parliament has ultimate sovereignty in the UK.

Sir William Cash: That is absolutely the fundamental doctrine. All I am saying to my hon. Friend—I have said it to the House many times—is that when, by a solemn Act of a sovereign Parliament, we transfer a decision to the British people by six to one in this House, that is an act of transferring sovereignty to them so that they can make the decision. It is as simple as that.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): Is it not the case that no Prime Minister, no Member of Parliament and no Parliament is above the people, and that we are all supposed to be servants of the people?

Sir William Cash: I agree with everything that my hon. Friend said, but the reality is that in these special circumstances, it is about who governs and it is about sovereignty. The sovereignty was given to the people on this particular question by an Act of Parliament, as well as by their intrinsic right to vote in general elections.

My next and last point is on the question of constitutional comparisons. I will refer to a number of Bills on which, on previous occasions, we have had a similar sort of procedure. The Northern Ireland legislation to which you referred yesterday, Mr Speaker, in response to a point of order was something of a particular case, but it was not the same type of legislation that we are dealing with here. There was the War Crimes Act 1991. There was the Parliament Act itself and a series of other Bills. There was the Hunting Act 2004, which I do not think really falls into this category, because it was a different sort of Bill.

When we are making judgments about constitutional matters, the question is one of apples and pears. It is the question of whether there is a distinct constitutional difference. The point that I am making, in general terms, is that there is a very specific constitutional difference between this Bill and the other Bills to which the shortened, accelerated procedure has been applied. These matters were considered by the House of Lords Constitution Committee, which was deeply critical of the speed with which certain Bills relating to Northern Ireland were dealt with.

The essence of the problem is that the present situation contradicts the precedents, because this Bill is so shambolic and so badly drafted. Moreover, I think I heard my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset suggest that the amendments would be dealt with in the undemocratic House of Lords. For heaven's sake! The House of Lords is a body that, in matters of this kind, does not really have the status that the House of Commons has. I put it no higher than that.

Sandy Martin: Given what the hon. Gentleman is saying about the House of Lords, will he join us at some subsequent time in reforming it?

Sir William Cash: The hon. Gentleman is in for a pleasant surprise. I have been talking about reform of the House of Lords, on and off, for the last 20 years, and I believe that it is necessary. However, I will leave that aside, because I do not think it is directly relevant to the point that I am making.

We have had the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018, the War Crimes Act 1991, and the European Parliamentary Elections Act 1999. We have also had the Hunting Act, but, as I said earlier, I do not think that it is strictly relevant. In the case of the War Crimes Act and the European Parliamentary Elections Act, the Parliament Act 1911 became involved, which I think is very interesting. The 1911 Act applies a great deal of delay to a Bill, and that is very relevant to this particular case. I think I am right in saying that the reason for adopting this procedure was to speed up the Bill's progress in order to avoid any delay that would take us beyond 12 April, for example, as a result of which there would not be the opportunities of which the Members concerned wish to avail themselves.

There are some further examples. There is the Parliament Act 1949, and there is the Defence of the Realm Act 1914. The context of the 1914 Act was completely different as well. That Bill was dealt with very rapidly because it was so urgent in the context of fighting the first world war. This is another kind of war—this is a war fought on pieces of paper—and I think that that is part of our biggest problem. We are fighting a battle about who governs the country, and who will be able to determine the outcome. Let us consider, for example, the question of how the laws will be made under the rubric of the European treaties. As I said the other day, if we remain in the transition period for some years—the number varies from two to four—the House will be politically castrated. As things stand, it will not be able to do anything to influence any law in any field or any competence within the EU treaties, and we will effectively be governed by the majority vote in the Council of Ministers.

This Bill is indicative of the problems that we are up against. It is not an expedited Bill; it is not an accelerated Bill; it is a Bill of constitutional execution. It means that, as a result of the procedures followed, and the procedures that will follow from the fact that the withdrawal agreement—if it goes through—will end up allowing 27 other countries to legislate for us, we will have no right to veto any of those laws. That is, to me, the greatest reason for objecting to the proposal. Furthermore, the Northern Ireland backstop is part of that situation with the control of laws.

So I think this is a grave moment in our constitutional history. I think the Bill is reprehensible; I do not think it should pass. I think it is a disgrace that it was brought in, and I have to say that 30 Members of my own party are responsible for this, because otherwise it would never have got through as a result of the combination of votes with those on the other side of the House. I regard the Bill as a grave constitutional indictment of those who have been responsible for bringing it in.

3.35 pm

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash). We do not agree about much, but I know he cares passionately about the constitution of his country and I very much respect him for that. I rise to support the business of the House motion and to lend my support to the amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) of which I am a co-sponsor.

Despite the disappointing lack of support for the motion I tabled in this House on Monday, which was designed to protect the whole UK from a no-deal Brexit, I remain of the view that only cross-party working can resolve the crisis we are in at present. As I have said previously, it is no secret that I came to this House primarily to advance the cause of Scottish independence, and it is also no secret that I, in line with the wishes of my constituents and my country, do not wish to exit from the EU, but I see the priority at present to be protecting all the nations of these islands, and in that I include the Republic of Ireland, from the economic and social damage that would be done by a no-deal Brexit. That is what is informing my position today.

It has been said previously—it is not terribly original, but I am going to say it again—that this Government are in office but not in power, and have all but officially

lost the confidence of this House. That is why Parliament must take control, to try to protect all the nations in the United Kingdom from the incompetence of this Conservative Government. And I would just say that part of the problem, and part of the problem that the hon. Member for Stone was referring to, is the inability of this Government to get to grips with governing as a minority Government. That is not an easy thing to do, but if they want a tip on how to do it effectively, I suggest that the Prime Minister speak to the First Minister of Scotland, who is here to see her today, because she runs an effective minority Administration. The Prime Minister might also want to look at the history of the former First Minister of Scotland, who ran a very effective minority Administration for four years—so effective that he went on to gain an outright majority in a system designed not to give outright majorities. There is a lesson in that for all of us.

The Leader of the House of Commons (Andrea Leadsom)
rose—

Joanna Cherry: I will not give way to the right hon. Lady because she persistently refuses to give way to me and I do not want to take up too much time, so it is tit for tat I am afraid on this occasion.

I support this business motion and I support amendment (a) because we must keep control of the House, not just for today but, as the hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse) said, very importantly for Monday. I am one of many people who think the Bill laid before the House is somewhat deficient. It certainly would not give the degree of protection that the amendment I moved on Monday would have, and which also had a Bill behind it, but we are not there and there is not much I can do about that. I may try to amend the Bill later, but it is the best we have for now, and I see it as an insurance policy against the talks between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition breaking down or coming up with an even more unsatisfactory situation than we are in at present, which I suspect is what is going to happen.

I also very much agree with the hon. Member for Bath and the right hon. Member for Leeds Central that we must secure the indicative votes slot for Monday and we should be doing that particularly to make sure that composite motions are debated and options for the future combined with the option of a second referendum are debated on that day. The majority of political parties in this House support a second referendum, and I include in that the official Opposition, having regard to their conference motion.

I was interested to hear from the evidence that the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union gave to the Exiting the European Union Committee this morning that even the Prime Minister might now acknowledge that a second referendum or people's vote has to be an option. It has been a cause for concern to some of us that Labour Front Benchers have seemed less than enthusiastic about that option on occasions, but I know that they have not written it off completely. I entreat them to ensure that it stays on the agenda, and Monday will provide a way of doing that.

I also say to Labour Members that if their leader cannot secure a second vote in his talks with Prime Minister, he will never be forgiven. He will be remembered as the Labour leader who helped to deliver a Conservative

[Joanna Cherry]

Brexit, and I am sure that no one in the Labour party would wish him to be remembered in that way. As things stand, I am prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt, because we do not yet know the outcome of those negotiations. However, I also want a fall-back position, which is that the House of Commons should have control of the agenda on Monday so that we can hold the indicative votes.

I know that a lot of Conservative Members are really worried about the precedent that could be set by today, and I sort of understand their worry, but I would say to them that today we really are in extremis. The whole of the United Kingdom is at serious risk of crashing out of the European Union without a deal, and that would be a disaster for the economies of these islands and for our social fabric—[*Interruption.*] People are muttering at me that I should vote for the withdrawal agreement, but that is not my mandate. Please try to understand and respect the fact that there are Members of this House who were elected on a manifesto of stopping Brexit. They should please desist from trying to ram their opinions down our throats, because that is not acceptable.

Sir William Cash: I much respect the honesty of the hon. and learned Lady, and actually she is right. I have never, in any of the debates on this issue—heavens above, there have been enough of them—criticised the SNP, because I know that it has that manifesto commitment. I also know that its objective is the independence of Scotland. Adding to the point that she has already made, I want to ask her this. If the truncated procedure that we are witnessing now had been applied to, for example, the Scotland Act 2016 or to any amendments to it, would she not have regarded that as an unbelievable travesty?

Joanna Cherry: I would, and that is a point that I am coming on to address. I must point out to the hon. Gentleman, however, that the Scotland Act was indeed an unbelievable travesty because, when it passed through this House, 56 of the 59 MPs who represented Scotland here were Scottish National party MPs, yet not a single one of our amendments was accepted. So in fact, the present system can be a travesty, without having this process tacked on to it.

Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): I do not want to wander too far from the current matter, but just a week before the independence referendum, David Cameron said that if Scotland voted to remain in the United Kingdom, all forms of devolution would be there and all would be possible. When it came to our amendments, however, none was able to be there and none was accepted.

Joanna Cherry: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Many promises were made by David Cameron, Ruth Davidson and others during the Scottish independence referendum that have not been kept.

Richard Benyon (Newbury) (Con): The business motion?

Joanna Cherry: I will return to the business motion, which in fairness I have addressed so far—[*Interruption.*] I know that people sometimes do not want to hear the SNP voices in this House, and that has not gone unnoticed

in Scotland. Judging by my mailbox, it certainly has not gone unnoticed by many of my constituents who are not natural SNP voters but who still do not like the sight of SNP MPs being howled down. Conservative Members might like to bear that in mind. I am sure that Ruth Davidson will be on the phone to them, because she seems to think that she is going to beat me in my constituency at the next general election—[HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear!”] I wouldn’t get too excited, because the person they sent last time did not succeed, and that was before this fiasco unfolded.

I shall get back to my main point, which is the legitimate concern of Conservative Members that what is happening today might set an unfortunate precedent. I say to them that we are in extremis today because of the Government’s failure to govern properly. Nothing in this sorry, chaotic fiasco of Brexit should set a precedent for anything we do in the future. What we are doing today, we are doing only because we are in extremis.

3.44 pm

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): I oppose this business motion. The idea of speed legislating is dangerous and wrong on this occasion, although I fully accept that there are times when legislating at pace can make sense. If the House has a consensus and the matters are not contentious, of course there is no need to waste the House’s time on pointless debates in which Members try to think of something to say. Were there a great national emergency and most people in the House thought that the Government should take emergency powers to deal with a catastrophe, that would have to go through at pace. However, there is no national emergency that can justify this, and there is certainly no consensus in this House.

We cannot be sure how the vote will go this evening. It may be that my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) has enough Conservative rebels to tip it over the line—I think that that is the modern phrase—for himself, or it may be that enough Conservatives respond to the Government’s whipping and carry the day with our DUP partners. Either way, I think we can be sure that a large and significant minority of Members of Parliament who have lost will be in no way part of any consensus. On my side of the argument, there would be a minority who in no way think that such legislation should be rushed through at pace. We feel that we have every right to table amendments and to discuss them in the normal way.

Antoinette Sandbach: My right hon. Friend ought to be a little careful, because a number of us voted for the Prime Minister’s deal, which would have got us out of Europe on 29 March. As someone who voted for the deal, the suggestion that this proposal is somehow about losers’ bad faith does not accurately reflect my actions.

John Redwood: I think my hon. Friend misheard me. I made no such allegation about her or my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset. I was paying them all due civility in saying that they may win, but nobody can claim that there is a big consensus in this House or a large potential majority on either side, so we need more time than is being offered in this business motion. Lightning legislation is bad legislation.

As we have already heard, this potential legislation poses fundamental questions about the nature of government, how government is conducted and the powers of Government, which go to the heart of our very processes, and seeks to overturn conventions and Standing Orders that have been in place and accepted by Governments of both persuasions for a long time. That should happen only after due consideration. I am not one to think that there should be no constitutional change or experiment. I have often been against my own Government and have understood the need to use the available procedures to get them to change their mind. However, we should not enter into a radical transformation on the basis of just a few hours' debate, which is what we are being offered in this business motion.

Mr Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Con): Viewing this situation objectively, I do not believe that there is any constitutional impropriety whatsoever in what the House is being asked to do this afternoon. It simply does not arise. The truth is that we have a flexible constitution. I rather agree with my right hon. Friend that one often wants more time, but it is precisely when one faces an emergency that the flexibility of the constitution becomes most desirable, and I cannot alter the fact that the emergency exists. With that in mind, I would hope that he would appreciate that there is nothing improper in what the House is doing. In fact, it is only since a recent date in this House's history that we have been fettered by the Government's almost total control of the Order Paper.

John Redwood: Again, I fear that my right hon. Friend did not listen carefully. I never suggested any impropriety. I said that we wished to proceed in an orderly manner, which Mr Speaker will ensure that we can do, and that there are occasions on which we need to change our procedures or modify our Standing Orders. On this occasion, however, the case I want to make is that there are some fundamental issues that are worthy of rather longer time than is being offered in this business motion.

Sir Oliver Letwin *rose—*

John Redwood: I would quite like to develop my argument, but I will give way to my right hon. Friend.

Sir Oliver Letwin: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way. I rather agree that it would be desirable to have longer to discuss these things, although, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) just said, I am not suggesting any impropriety. Nevertheless, there is innovation here, and it would be nice to have longer.

Is not the fundamental difference between us that my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) thinks—I know he genuinely thinks this, and he has thought about it a lot—that leaving on Thursday week without a deal is not an emergency, whereas many of us who support this motion think, rightly or wrongly, that leaving on Thursday week is an emergency? Is that not the real difference between us?

John Redwood: We are going beyond the business of the House motion, but of course it is not an emergency. We have had two years and nine months to prepare for it, and the Government have assured us that they are

ready to leave without an agreement, if necessary. More than half the public now think it is the right thing to do, but that is a matter of substance and not a matter of the business of the House motion.

I will briefly mention three elements that give the Government an advantage so that they can claim to be the Government and behave as the Government, if they have the wit and the votes to do so—of course, they need to keep enough votes enough of the time to fulfil their role.

The first element is control of the Order Paper. Of course the Government should not have complete control of the Order Paper and, by convention, they agree with the Opposition on providing Opposition days, which they must do, and allow the Opposition to debate the things they wish to debate, either in their own time or in Government time. If the Government do not do that, things can break down and become a matter of controversy, and the public may side with the Opposition, so the Government have to behave in a sensible way through the usual channels on business.

By tradition, for many years now, the Government set a Queen's Speech programme of legislation, which is meant to be a coherent and consistent programme—and under a good Government it is—that reflects what they have persuaded the electors to vote for, because they have more seats than anyone else in the House. The programme is presented by Her Majesty, usually annually—we are in a strange Parliament because we only do Brexit, so there was no need for a new annual speech because this Parliament has been on groundhog day for two years and nine months.

As someone who used to be interested in this subject, I actually want to go on and talk about some of the other subjects in which I am interested. I would like this done. By convention, we have an annual Queen's Speech in which the Government present what they think is a coherent programme of legislation that fits into how they are trying to govern the country, and then it is up to Parliament to rip it apart, amend it, improve it, say that bits of it are not acceptable and try to influence the future programme.

Andrea Leadsom: My right hon. Friend is making some good points, and I add that not only would the House usually have much more time to consider a Bill of such constitutional significance but, of course, the Bill would, previously to coming before the House, go before a committee consisting of the business managers, the Law Officers, the territorial Ministers and many others to test both the policy and the handling plan. There would be significant cross-House engagement, and it is for that reason that, in this Session alone, 43 Bills have received Royal Assent. I completely agree with him that due process is incredibly important.

John Redwood: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend.

The second big issue that is relevant to this business of the House motion is that, traditionally, only a Minister may move a money resolution in support of legislation that requires the expenditure of public funds. Again, there is very good reason for this, because the Government have to be responsible for the Budget, and they normally understand that, if they want to spend more, they have to raise more through taxes or borrowing. The Government are responsible for both sides of the account.

[John Redwood]

Again, the House can criticise, refuse to agree or try to get the Government to shift their position, but it is the Government who are financially responsible to the markets and for all the other reporting that has to be done. This proposal could have very significant financial consequences indeed, because staying in the European Union is an extremely expensive thing to do, and I think it would need a money resolution, which should be moved by a Minister of the Crown.

Sir William Cash: I intend to raise a point of order on this question but, as my right hon. Friend is the first person to mention it, he may be interested to know that I have already prepared a comprehensive note on the question of a money resolution. It would cost UK taxpayers some £36 billion if our contributions are extended for up to two years, which is a vast sum of money. I have written a paper for Mr Speaker and others explaining why I believe a money resolution is required, and at least 50 Members have backed my letter to Mr Speaker on this question. That will come up later.

John Redwood: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that. Again, it is important to have it on the record in this debate for the House's consideration that we are dealing with things that could have precedents with wide ramifications that go way beyond the next few days and whether we leave in accordance with the views of the British people or not.

The final of my three points is perhaps even more relevant to this particular proposal: it is tradition that the Government have vested in them Crown prerogative, and the Prime Minister and Ministers act on behalf of the Crown in all international negotiations. That is not just our view, important though that is, in this House of Commons; while we still remain subject to the superior law of Brussels, it is also the law of Brussels. The Brussels authorities—the European Union—do not wish to negotiate with groups of MPs. They wish to negotiate with the UK Government, because it is the UK Government who are the signatory to the treaty and the UK Government who have sought the agreement of the EU to our withdrawal—or indeed to our automatic withdrawal under article 50 should no agreement be reached.

Kate Hoey: Does it concern the right hon. Gentleman that so many groups of MPs, ex-Prime Ministers and so on—not official Select Committees, which might have gone to the EU to see Michel Barnier and others—seem to have been trotting over to see the European Union as though they are almost negotiating on behalf of this Parliament and almost advising Michel Barnier as to what to do to make sure we end up either not having a Brexit or having a very soft Brexit? Does that not worry him?

John Redwood: It worries me, but I am a freedom-loving young man and I think that people will do what they want to do; I do not want to stop MPs expressing their views and going to talk to people with whom we are trying to negotiate. I also have a right to a view on it and I agree with the hon. Lady that if those MPs went there with the express intention of delaying or sabotaging Brexit—if they went there to weaken the pretty feeble

position the Government had already adopted in the negotiations in order to make it more difficult for us to get any kind of agreement that I could agree to—that is a matter of grave regret. That will be judged by the British people in subsequent elections. It is not for me to make the misery of those MPs greater; they will need to answer to their constituents about that.

Sir William Cash: When I was talking about the money resolution, I ought to have mentioned that it is not just me who has made these submissions; I understand that a Minister has also made representations. I just want to confirm, on the record, that it is not just Back Benchers doing this, but the Government, because a Minister has told me that he has raised them.

John Redwood: I am pleased the Government have made that representation, as it adds force to the case I was making.

On this Crown prerogative point, the EU position and the internationally agreed position is that only the Government can formally represent and negotiate on behalf of the UK. So one of my problems, which I raised directly with my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), is how far can this House go in instructing and controlling the negotiation? He gave me a sensible answer, saying that the House was not going to try to say that there had to be a delay, because he fully understood my point that that is ultimately in the EU's gift. As I pointed out, it is in this House's gift to insist on a Minister seeking a delay. He rightly added that it is in this House's gift to decide whether to accept any delay should the EU grant it, but the central point is that, assuming this House wanted a delay, most of the power rests with the EU. As we saw the last time a needless delay was sought and granted, quite a long delay—to 30 June—was requested, but the effective delay turned out to be only until 12 April.

The point I am making is that we do not want to take time debating something that misleads people. A lot of people outside this House think that today we are debating a Bill that will require and achieve a delay, whereas it cannot possibly guarantee to do that. People must also understand that even if this House reaches an agreement with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, she may not end up with anything like that which the House was seeking.

The hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse), who has disappeared, said that she had discovered that we could do anything. I have to disabuse her of that notion in two ways. First, even this House and all Members of Parliament—sometimes the public do not understand this—have to obey the law. Our advantage is that we can change the law if enough of us wish to do so.

Secondly, the hon. Lady also has to understand that great though this House can be once we are out of the European Union, and powerful though it is even still within the European Union, there are a lot of things for which it cannot sensibly legislate. Let us suppose that all working people would like it to rain on Mondays and Tuesdays, and be sunny on Saturdays and Sundays. That would be very convenient and an extremely popular law to pass, but there is no point in passing such a law, because even this House does not control the weather. I feel the same about the European Union.

There is absolutely no point in this House legislating for how the EU should respond, what its conduct should be or what laws it should pass—although they are a matter of great interest to me and many others—because we have absolutely no power over it. Indeed, that was at heart of the referendum campaign. What the SNP never accepts when it uses our phrase, “take back control”, is that the control that we wish to take back is all those mighty powers granted to the European Union, which the SNP is relaxed about. As soon as the Executive here wants any power to behave as a normal Government, however, the SNP says that that is unacceptable and Parliament needs to take it back.

I hope that the House will consider the business motion carefully, that more will come to my view—this is too little time to discuss such fundamental issues—and that they will agree with me that the big issues are to do with our future procedures and with the balance between the Executive and Parliament. I am one who often criticises the Executive, but I do not want to go too far this afternoon so that all government is in effect impossible. They must retain control of the agenda and of the money.

4.1 pm

Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab): I support the business motion and the amendment in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn). The House of Commons is in a very unhappy and unsatisfactory place, but there can be no doubt in the minds of anyone in this House or in the country that we are in the midst of a national crisis and that we face an emergency, not least the real prospect that without affirmative action by the Government—certainly by Parliament—we risk crashing out of the European Union with no deal whatever.

I recognise that no deal is the desired outcome for some Members of this House and for some people in our country, but it is not a future that would command the support of the majority of the people; it certainly does not command the support of a majority in this House, which has ruled out that scenario repeatedly. Even those who argue for leaving the European Union with no deal, believing it to be some kind of pure Brexit—which I do not remember being sold to people during the referendum campaign, by the way—will certainly not enjoy living through it. The immediate consequences would be the complete disruption of supply chains in this country and of the ability for goods to flow across borders. The consequences for every aspect of our society would be huge, from the price of food in our shops to the ability of our businesses to function properly.

That is why, in an almost unprecedented display of unity, the CBI and the TUC have repeatedly warned this House of the consequences of no deal. That is why I am contacted regularly by businesses in my constituency, fearing the prospect. I understand that the ongoing uncertainty is damaging for our country and that by extending article 50 we might be lengthening the agony—it does feel like agony—but we are making decisions that will affect our country for generations to come. It is crucial that we get them right, for the interests of our economy, our national security, and Britain’s place and standing in the world.

The second point is that this is a mess and a shambles entirely of the Government’s making. The simple truth is that we would not be required to pass emergency

legislation in these circumstances had the Prime Minister not sought to run down the clock deliberately at every moment, hoping and wishing that she would be able to ram a frankly woeful agreement and political declaration through the House of Commons, even if only by threatening us with the prospect of crashing out of the European Union. It has been “My way or the highway” consistently throughout the process. The Government, through their lack of leadership, have created a vacuum that the House of Commons now needs to fill. It is a responsibility that weighs heavily on the shoulders of every Member of this House, whatever our party affiliation, and however we voted in the referendum.

We are trying to agree a way forward that can bring some kind of satisfactory resolution to a situation that is completely unprecedented in the history of our country. People understandably criticise Parliament for not yet having been able to reach a majority on any proposition, but they should take comfort from the idea that perhaps our representative democracy is functioning quite well, because out there in the country, the people are also deeply divided—in families, workplaces and communities. It is not surprising, therefore, that this House is divided, not just along traditional lines, but within the families of our political parties.

I turn to the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central. On just two occasions, Members of the House, acting in good faith, have tried to see whether consensus can be built around any of a range of options, so that one way or another, we can draw a line under this process of negotiating our exit from the European Union. In just two days, I think we have achieved signs of breakthrough, which is rather more than the Government have done in the past two years. We have seen emerging consensus on the possibility of a deal based around a softer Brexit, and on putting a deal back to the public, so that they are given the final say on the way forward. Those proposals may not yet have achieved a majority, but after debate, proposals on a customs union and a confirmatory vote came incredibly close to securing a majority of votes.

Let us be honest with ourselves and each other: because the votes were indicative and non-binding, and certainly included Government abstentions, lots of Members have not yet had the chance to offer their views, and others, myself included, would be prepared to compromise still further to find some way forward for our country.

What we have been discussing for the best part of two and a half years, be it the Prime Minister’s deal, no deal or any range of soft Brexits, bears little resemblance to what people were sold during the referendum campaign. That is the dilemma that has plagued the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, and the House of Commons since 2016. A range of promises were made during the campaign, but even the finest negotiator in the history of the world would struggle to deliver in full that complete range of promises. It is simply not possible, because people were never entirely honest about the trade-offs between sovereignty, our economic interests and our partnership with our biggest trading partners—and that is before we get on to the wider geopolitics, and the disruptive world around us.

This has been a difficult process. If we want to break the deadlock and restore some democratic legitimacy to this deeply discredited process, whatever deal the House

[*Wes Streeting*]

arrives at with the European Union ought to be put back to the public. That is not because it will heal all the divisions or leave everyone feeling happy; we are not in that place. It is because allowing the people the final say, particularly in a confirmatory ballot in which the deal, having already been done, would not have to return to the House of Commons, offers us the possibility of resolution. That, I accept, is a debate for another day, but unless we pass this business motion and the amendment in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central, we may not have that opportunity.

If people want to oppose and vote down the Bill, or table amendments to it, they should do that at its subsequent stages. If they want to oppose any number of proposals that might come forward in an indicative vote, they can do that again, but I think the country will look down on the House of Commons if, at this stage in the process, we do not offer an opportunity of seeing off the threat of no deal and the chaos that would ensue. We may not yet have achieved a majority and built consensus in the House of Commons, but we should show that that is not through want of trying, or through a lack of good faith, debate and deep consideration.

The public have run out of patience with Parliament—I think that is entirely reasonable—but it is up to us now in the coming hours, days, weeks and months to begin the process of restoring their confidence in this House of Commons. Whatever our differences, during the referendum or since, it has been my experience in just under four years in this place that the people who serve here are people of integrity, decency and honour who are acting in the national interest and doing what they believe to be right. We may not agree on the way forward, but we can yet build consensus. Finding consensus, agreeing a way forward and, better still, involving the public might be a way to begin the process of healing our deeply divided country.

4.10 pm

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Ilford North (Wes Streeting), who set out his case very well. I will talk first about the business of the House motion, before discussing amendment (a) in the name of the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), which Mr Speaker has selected. I will then also pick up on one or two points that have been made so far in the debate.

My real problem with the business of the House motion is that my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) is attempting to take a controversial Bill—I mean, it is fundamental to the debate that we have been having for the past three years—and, to put it politely, to ram it through the House in a day. My right hon. Friend did not even give sufficient notice of the fact that he was going to do so. That is why my amendment, which I accept Mr Speaker has not selected, proposed a relatively modest change to allow us to debate the business of the House motion today, and then to debate the Bill tomorrow. At least hon. Members would then have had an opportunity to see the Bill, consider it and think about sensible amendments. That would have meant a better process and a reasonable balance. However, I accept my right

hon. Friend's injunction that there is a timetable to this process and that it would have been slightly otiose to have taken months to consider the Bill.

I am not going to dwell on the Bill in great detail, but I will mention it to provide one illustration of why I do not agree with having just a few hours today, with little notice and little opportunity to amend the Bill. One of the fundamental aspects of the Bill was drawn out by the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry), when she referred to clause 1(6) and (7). These subsections—and the structure of the Bill—refer to the time limit and the extension that may or may not be sought by the Prime Minister, and they mandate the Prime Minister to put before the House a motion that specifically mentions the length of the extension. Hon. Members will understand why I think that is fundamentally flawed, and therefore why the Bill needs more debate, if they think about the extension that the Prime Minister just sought. She sought a straightforward extension of a certain fixed length, but what the European Council actually gave us in return was actually a much more complex matter—a two-part extension with a number of conditions. The way in which the Bill as currently drafted does not really enable that complexity to be put before the House and properly debated.

Sir Oliver Letwin: Everything else that my right hon. Friend has said so far that I do not agree with was accurate, but I do not think that his final point was accurate. It is perfectly possible within the structure of the Bill for the Prime Minister's motion to explain conditionality on the date because it can add to the motion that is given in form. Also, there is specific provision in clause 1(6) and (7) for the EU to come back with its view, whatever it is. The Prime Minister then has to bring that to the House. Obviously, in bringing it to the House she will need to describe what the EU has said about the conditionality. I do not think that there is any problem with that. The problem that my right hon. Friend has is a deeper one about timing and consideration, and that is a separate matter.

Mr Harper: I have listened to my right hon. Friend. I will not spend too much longer on this issue, because I will then be straying into a debate on the Bill. Having just looked at the Bill again, I do not think that my right hon. Friend is accurate, but the fact that he and I—both reasonably competent readers of Bills—have reached different conclusions about the same words proves my point that we need longer to debate the Bill, to test amendments and to understand exactly what the House is being asked to agree.

My right hon. Friend also talked about the role of the other place. This House often does not spend long enough debating legislation and then—it is a process I deprecate—expects the House of Lords, at a slow pace and in more detail, to improve it. I note that the Leader of the House was unable to give any information on what the plan is at the other end of the building, and I do not know whether any information has reached her from the Leader of the House of Lords—

Andrea Leadsom indicated dissent.

Mr Harper: My right hon. Friend shakes her head, so we do not have that intelligence. My understanding is that an attempt similar to this one will take place in the

other place. It might not be called a business of the House motion—I am not as familiar with the terminology used in the other place—but the intention is effectively to ram the Bill through in a day. My right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset suggested that the discussions he has had indicate that a large majority of the House of Lords was content with the Bill in advance, which does not suggest to me that it will receive significant scrutiny. Indeed, it sounds as though it is not going to get any scrutiny at all.

Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): Has my right hon. Friend heard the rumour that Government Whips in the other place are not planning in any way to stop the Bill being rammed through in a day? In fact, it has been suggested in some quarters that they might even be seeking discreetly to assist it.

Mr Harper: I had not heard that specific piece of information, but even if it is not the case, if the Bill does go through the other place very rapidly, in effect a Bill with significant constitutional effects will have been passed without proper scrutiny in either House.

Mrs Main: Before the political point that was just made, my right hon. Friend was making the extremely valuable point that the House of Lords is a revising Chamber. We do the Lords a great disservice if we do not give them adequate time to advise and revise. This House will have very little time to take advantage of all the expertise in that House if its Members are not allowed to do their job in a proper fashion.

Mr Harper: I completely agree, but my major point was that I do not like the process whereby we do not consider Bills properly and then expect the Lords to do all the scrutiny. Certainly, when I was taking constitutional legislation through this House a number of years ago, as Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform, I tried to ensure that we had sufficient time to debate it properly, because for important constitutional matters, and particularly for this matter, which is effectively about enacting the result of a referendum of the people, it is important that it is elected Members who make the final decisions, not Members of the other place. My principal point on the substance of the business of the House motion is therefore that it provides insufficient time to allow proper scrutiny of the Bill.

The hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry), the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart), my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith) all referred to precedent. I think that a dispute broke out on the SNP Front Bench, because the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire acknowledged that this process was indeed a precedent, and the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West then tried to differentiate it and say that it was not really a precedent, arguing that Brexit is such an unprecedented process that we cannot draw any lessons from the use of this procedure. I think that they are mistaken.

I think that my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset and my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green made very reasonable points. As a former business manager, I think that future business managers will note that Members from

a number of different parties have accepted this as a legitimate process. It is perfectly true, as the shadow Leader of the House said, that Clerks would not allow anything disorderly to take place. That is correct, but a majority in this House can override Standing Orders and ram things through, and it is convention and self-restraint that stop Governments using their majorities in inappropriate ways.

Members on both sides of the House ought to reflect on the fact that if in future a Government with a significant majority choose to use that majority to override the usual conventions and procedures of the House and ram through pieces of controversial legislation in a day, those Members cannot complain that the Government are behaving inappropriately. I would deprecate that behaviour and would not want any part in it, but the people will be watching these proceedings and following this precedent. I am pretty sure that someone will try to use this precedent again at some point, and Members may regret supporting it today.

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): The right hon. Gentleman is speaking about the importance of honouring conventions, which are one of the things that govern this House, but is there not a degree of hypocrisy in the Government making that argument? So often in this Parliament we have seen the Government, who refuse to accept that they are a minority Government, riding roughshod over conventions such as granting Opposition days and taking cognisance of Opposition day motions passed by the House.

Mr Harper: I accept some of the arguments that the hon. Gentleman makes. I have not been a member of this Government; I have not served as a Minister under this Prime Minister. Certainly when I was a Minister and when I was responsible for scheduling the business of the House as the Government Chief Whip, we did vote on Opposition days, and when we had a longer Session we gave the Opposition the appropriate number of days. I often argued that we should restrain the use of our majority, to ensure that we behaved properly. There is some substance in what the hon. Gentleman says. There has been, to some extent, an equal and opposite reaction by the Opposition, who have explored mechanisms such as use of the Humble Address because they have been frustrated that the Government have not responded appropriately to Opposition days. The Government should reflect on that.

But in a way, that rather proves my point, which is that if Members behave in this way today and ram through a piece of controversial, contested legislation without a consensus in the House, they should not be surprised if in future a Government with a majority use this precedent and behave in the same way. When those Members are arguing against that, they will find the arguments they are making today being thrown back at them, and the force of their argument will be undercut.

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): My right hon. Friend is making an interesting speech. This procedure has been used in the past for legislation on Northern Ireland or even the Emergency Powers (Defence) Bill in 1939, but does he agree that it has always been when it was desperately important to get legislation through and there was a broad consensus on it—not, as we see today, when there is clearly a debate to be had about whether something is the right thing to do?

Mr Harper: I agree. My hon. Friend mentions Northern Ireland. I listened carefully to the point made by the hon. Member for North Down (Lady Hermon). Measures on Northern Ireland security matters and others have been expedited through the House because there has been a generally accepted need on both sides and between the usual channels that there is a need to do so. We have taken legislation through this House and the other place on a single day. She gave good examples of recent measures for which that has taken place. I understand that it has taken place with agreement between both Front-Bench teams, but she makes a perfectly reasonable point. I looked carefully at the most recent example of that, and I could not see any particular urgency or need to do that in a single day. It was agreed by the usual channels, but it may not necessarily be in the interests of Back-Bench Members, and particularly those from Northern Ireland, who may wish to have developed arguments about that legislation more fully than was possible. She made a good point.

The final point I want to make about the business of the House motion itself is in relation to the point made by the shadow Leader of the House on the detail of the legislation. She referred briefly to the Bill and made some points that I will not debate now, because that is properly to be done later. However, just as in the exchange between my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset and me, I do not agree with the points she made about the Bill, but the fact that, again, two people who understand the processes of the House can come to opposite conclusions about the words in the legislation just proves to me that we should have more time to debate it.

Moving on, I want to say a few words about amendment (a), which you have selected, Mr Speaker, in the name of the right hon. Member for Leeds Central. It is not about today's business, but an attempt to secure time on Monday. From listening to him, I think the plan is to have another session of indicative votes, and I want to say one or two words about that before I conclude. He, I think accurately, quoted the words in the Prime Minister's statement yesterday that "the Government stands ready to abide by the decision of the House"

in the event that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition are unable in their talks today and perhaps later to agree on a unified approach.

I do not disagree with the Prime Minister doing so, but that precedent should have been followed rather earlier. It still remains the case that, so far in this process, the only proposition on which the House has voted with a majority is the so-called Brady amendment, which received a majority of 16 on 29 January. I am disappointed that the Prime Minister did not take the instruction of the House on that occasion and successfully prosecute a renegotiation of the withdrawal agreement to amend the backstop. I accept the result of the referendum, but for me it is very important that the whole of the United Kingdom leaves the European Union together and does not split apart.

Lady Hermon: The right hon. Gentleman mentions the backstop. May I just remind him and other Members of the House that all the arguments—all the bitter arguments—about the backstop will become totally irrelevant if we do not approve the Prime Minister's Brexit deal? We need the Brexit deal to be signed and

approved by this House in order to have an implementation period, and it is only at the end of the implementation period that a backstop even becomes a possibility—a possibility—not a necessary or a requirement at that stage. We need the Bill.

Mr Harper: I note very carefully what the hon. Lady says. I have opposed the Cabinet's withdrawal agreement and political declaration twice because I think the backstop is a fundamental problem with the agreement. After the last couple of weeks of votes in the House and the Government's response to them, I came to the conclusion that the most central, overriding promise I made at the general election was to deliver Brexit, and I reluctantly came to the conclusion that I needed to support the withdrawal agreement in order to deliver Brexit, so I agree with her on that point. I behaved in that way on Friday, and I wish more of my right hon. and hon. Friends had done so, so that we could have got the withdrawal agreement over the line to secure that outcome.

The final point, in concluding my remarks on the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Leeds Central, was to ask him where we are hoping to go on this. I notice he referred to compositing motions, which is very much a Labour thing to do with sticking motions together. It seemed implicit in what he was saying and what one or two others have said, such as the hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse), that there is an assumption that if we take a number of propositions, none of which would secure a majority in the House, and glue them together in this compositing process—I am not sure that is a verb, but it sounds as though it is—

Hilary Benn *indicated assent.*

Mr Harper: The right hon. Gentleman is confirming that. I think that at Labour conferences compositing is a verb. There is an implicit assumption that, by gluing the motions together, we will automatically add up all the numbers and somehow magically majorities will pop out of them, but I just do not think that is very likely. I was looking at the various propositions, and I note that all of them received fewer votes in favour of them than the Cabinet's withdrawal agreement received on 29 March. They all received fewer votes than the Brady amendment. None of them had a majority. Indeed, there was a majority against the motion in the name of the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West, who is not here now, of 101, so it is more unpopular than the withdrawal agreement.

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Ind): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept, however, that if the Government were to Whip for their own withdrawal agreement and future framework, and to combine that with the undoubted support for putting that deal to the people, that would be the simplest way for the Prime Minister to get her deal through Parliament with an absolute guarantee of showing whether it was the will of the people?

Mr Harper: No, I fundamentally disagree, for this reason. I will give the hon. Lady a couple of examples. First, I suspect that there are many people—I do not know this, but it is my assumption—who supported the Cabinet's withdrawal agreement and political declaration who, if we attached a referendum to it, would no longer

support it, because those of us on the Conservative Benches made a commitment to implement the result of the referendum. Indeed, when the hon. Lady stood for election on these Benches, she made the same commitment, I believe. The public made a decision—it was a once-in-a-generation decision—to leave the European Union. That is what I want to deliver, and I promised not to have another referendum. If we added on a referendum, people who have currently supported the proposition would no longer support it. I for one will not vote for another referendum.

There is also something that I have spotted. It is no surprise to me that those who want to remain in the European Union want to have a binary choice between the Cabinet's deal and remain, because they have spotted that the proposition put forward by the Government is very unpopular in opinion polls. They have also noticed that many people who campaigned for leave do not believe that it is really leaving, and they think that if that is the binary choice presented to the public, it will be the best opportunity to get remain. They do not want a referendum with a range of choices. For my part, the only referendum that would be even vaguely justifiable is one that accepted that the public had asked to leave and simply gave them the choices of how to leave. That might be defensible, but nothing else.

Mrs Main: I am sure that my right hon. Friend is aware of this, but I want to put it on record that when the hon. Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) pressed her amendment on having a people's vote, it got 85 votes. Revisiting the matter, as she did just now, does not make it more popular.

Mr Harper: My hon. Friend makes a good point. I note from the indicative votes on Monday that, again, the motion on a confirmatory vote was supported by fewer people than the Cabinet's withdrawal agreement and did not achieve a majority.

Dr Wollaston: What the right hon. Gentleman seems to be confirming is that the withdrawal agreement and future framework does not represent the will of the people and is rather unpopular. In that circumstance, surely it would be better to check what the public support is, once we know what a known deal is. As he will know, if there were agreement to a confirmatory vote, a referendum would require an Act of Parliament, and during the passage of a referendum Bill it would be this House that determined what the questions would be. It would not be for us to set the question in advance of that; it would be open to debate.

Mr Harper: Indeed, but given that a number of Members of this House have made it quite clear that they do not want to deliver the result of the last referendum, I am not sure that a fair choice would be presented to the public or that they would be given the full range of options.

Let me conclude with a message for those on my Front Bench. I do not know where the discussions with the Leader of the Opposition are going to go, but all I would say is this. Having looked carefully at the indicative votes, I would issue a word of caution. If the Government end up trying to deliver a withdrawal agreement and political declaration that tries to deliver something that

has been opposed by a significant majority of their own Members of Parliament—75% of Conservative MPs voted against a customs union and common market 2.0—it is not going to end well. I urge the Government, even at this stage, to reflect on that and perhaps change course.

4.34 pm

Richard Benyon (Newbury) (Con): I have agreed with my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) on almost everything. He and I were on the same side in the referendum. In the Government and on the Back Benches, I have been awed by his intellect and his understanding of procedure. I supported him in the Lobby, to the concern of my Front Bench, on a number of occasions recently, not least on indicative votes. I agree with him, and with many Members on both sides of the House, about the utter horror that could be delivered on our constituents by a no-deal Brexit. I agree with my right hon. Friend that of the 17.4 million people who voted undeniably to leave the European Union, not all of them were voting to leave with no deal—they certainly were not—and that we need to make sure we leave in an ordered way. It therefore grieves me that I will not be joining my right hon. Friend in the Lobby tonight. I just want to take a few moments to explain to the House why.

I believe what my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith) said earlier about legislating in haste and repenting at leisure. Actually, I would amend it: if we legislate in haste, we repent in opposition. We need to be very careful about how we use the procedures of the House. I am entirely with my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset and others—many Members on both sides of the House, with whom I have worked with on these issues in recent months, are absolutely genuine—on using the procedures of the House to stop bad things, such as no deal, happening to our constituents, but my right hon. and hon. Friends must understand that their efforts are being played by people who want other things. We therefore have to be very careful about how we use them.

I came to the decision before I arrived at the House not to support the motion. I had no conversations with Ministers, Whips or anybody else. I am just uncomfortable about it. I believe that what happened yesterday is an issue in our debate on procedures. The Prime Minister made a clear commitment. In a Parliament where trust has become a much rarer commodity than at any time in my 14 years in this House, and where trust in this House is much limited from people outside it looking in, I do trust the Prime Minister. If that trust is not upheld, I am sure that the schadenfreude from all sides of the House will be heaped upon me. But this is a very difficult time for the country. This is a moment to show support for what she did last night and for the country as it leaves the European Union. We must respect the result of the referendum in a way that ensures we leave in an ordered fashion.

My commitment to the group of Members on all sides of the House with whom I have been working remains the same. My commitment to making sure we leave in an ordered way and respect the result of the referendum remains the same. However, I will be supporting the Government in the Lobby tonight.

4.38 pm

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): I rise to oppose the business motion. I want to draw out some of the points I made to my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) as the key reasons for my opposing it.

The first issue is that the Bill is so obviously entirely unnecessary, because of the commitment of the Prime Minister, given on TV last night to the entire nation, to the effect that she was minded to seek an article 50 extension in any event as one of the possibilities, and that she did not want us to leave without a deal. In those circumstances, it is entirely obvious to me that this Bill is completely otiose.

I would go further. When I pressed my right hon. Friend, he said that this was a matter of transparency and that the House should have a say. I suspect, however, that he would not be able to cite one example of transparency that the Prime Minister has not already provided to the House. In response to my intervention, my right hon. Friend could not provide a realistic and respectable reason that the Bill was needed. I put it to the House that that is because he tabled the motion and the Bill before the Prime Minister made her statement. The Prime Minister having made her statement, I would hope that my right hon. Friend has the grace to do the honourable thing and withdraw them.

Sir Oliver Letwin: My hon. Friend is right to say that the Bill has a long genesis; it is the fifth of its kind, and it goes back to long before the Prime Minister's statement. Of course, we had the opportunity, once she had made the statement, to make a judgment about whether to press the motion and the Bill, and we judged that we should. What does my hon. Friend think there is in the Prime Minister's statement—I do not criticise her for this, because I think her intention is clear—to prevent her from making a decision for which she does not have the House's approval on the length of the extension that she seeks?

Charlie Elphicke: My answer to that is simple. The Prime Minister has already given a commitment, and she does not need an Act of Parliament to reinforce the commitment that she has made. This is a classic case of putting on boilerplate for no purpose whatsoever.

Sir Oliver Letwin: My hon. Friend is right that the Prime Minister has made a commitment to seek an extension, and I trust her on that. However, she has not made a commitment to a given length of extension, and she has not made a commitment to seek the approval of the House for the length of the extension. Therefore, I do not see how my hon. Friend can argue that the Bill does not do something beyond the Prime Minister's statement.

Charlie Elphicke: My response to that is that in clause 1(2) there are square brackets instead of a length for the extension. It seems to me that the promoter and sponsors of the Bill could not decide on the length of the extension, so they decided to cover up their own disagreement by putting the matter in square brackets. The Prime Minister has said that she is not minded to leave without a deal, and that she is minded to seek an extension. Although I do not agree with that view, I

know that my right hon. Friend does, so he will be pleased about the position that she is taking. He should quit while he is ahead, pocket her commitment and allow the rest of us to move on.

I will come to the other great danger of what my right hon. Friend is doing, which is the danger to our constitution. Our constitution in this United Kingdom has always been unwritten and determined largely by convention. Unlike the United States constitution, which is written and therefore quite hard to change, ours has a long tradition of bending like a reed in the wind. The landscape shifts when events shift. That is a great strength of our constitution, but it is also a great weakness, because constitutional innovations such as this have unintended consequences.

I also made a point to the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) about the risks. The Opposition say that we can use emergency legislation for a matter such as this—even though this Bill, as I have said, is completely unnecessary—and it has to be done in an awful hurry. If that is the case, what is to prevent the Government from asking, “Why do we have Committees of the whole House for Finance Bills? Why don't we just do away with them? In fact, why do we have a Committee at all on the Finance Bill? Why don't we just pass the Finance Bill in a day?”

My right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset has pointed the way to an innovation that could well be used by the Government to curtail debate in this House, and I oppose it for that reason. Today, I may be speaking from the Government Benches, but on another day I might be speaking from the Opposition Benches and wanting to make sure that there was proper scrutiny. The Government of the day should have scrutiny from the Opposition. They should not be afraid of that, but this precedent, which—let us be clear—is largely being created by the Opposition, is a grave threat.

Let us also be clear about the numbers who are backing this Bill. This is not some Conservative innovation. It is an innovation by the Scottish National party; by the new party, which is frightened of going to the polls and facing the people; by the Labour party; and by a handful of Conservatives. It is really a Labour-dominated move to try to seize control of the legislative timetable. I say to Labour and all Opposition parties that sauce for the gander is sauce for the goose. The precedent that they are creating means that this kind of emergency legislation procedure could well be used for routine business. They are playing with constitutional fire and they will live to regret it.

Our rules have always given great latitude to the Chair of our illustrious institution. I have always been a huge supporter of yours, Mr Speaker, but what if a future Government came along with a larger majority and said, “Actually, we are not so sure about the discretion of the Chair in choosing amendments and motions and enabling the business of the House, as we have long allowed our Chair to under Standing Orders.”? Colleagues know that in other Parliaments around the world, including in the Commonwealth, that same discretion that we afford is not afforded to their Chairs.

Innovations and situations such as this may give people pause for thought, including the Procedure Committee in the House of Commons, and mean that they start looking at that and saying, “Maybe we should allow less discretion.” I think that we would be the

poorer for that, but that is where this leads. We need to be very honest with ourselves about the risks and unintended consequences of doing such things. We need to make sure that we give voice to the minority opinion in this House, give time in the House and do not rush through legislation in this way, using emergency procedures when there is no emergency and no necessity, as I have pointed out.

There is another issue: what if we end up with a written constitution as a result of this? We would be the poorer for that because we would be less flexible. We also have to remember, when we look at constitutional innovations, that there was a time—about two centuries ago—when this House did not have the Government controlling this House's business. In that time there was effectively the separation of powers and there were vetoes of legislation by the Government of the day as a mechanism for putting in blocks. As we know, those exist in the United States today. The President of the United States can just put a Bill in his pocket—that is a pocket veto—or he can formally veto Bills of Congress. If we go down this route where we try to seize the Order Paper from the Government of the day, we are heading constitutionally and logically towards a separation of powers, which in turn means that our old mechanisms, last used for the Scottish Militia Bill, come back into play and become constitutional again in reaction to the unconstitutional, or constitutional, innovations—people can choose that as they will—that we are seeing in this House.

Situations that people are talking about, such as where Parliament is prorogued or where there are vetoes and in relation to other mechanisms that exist on the separation of powers, is where this leads. That is why I am very cautious and urge the House not to pass this business motion. That is not simply because it is not necessary for this Bill, not simply because this is an abuse of the emergency legislation procedure, and not simply because it can be used against the Opposition, and I fear will be for the rest of this Parliament. Every time that they whinge about a programme motion and say that they do not have enough time, or say they want protected time, the Government will be within their rights to cite the precedent that they have created. That is why I urge colleagues to oppose this motion, because it will not lead to any good for either side of this House.

4.48 pm

Ms Nadine Dorries (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con): I will keep my remarks brief. I think I understand the reasons that this Bill has been brought to the House today and I agree with everything that my colleagues have said. I do not think that there is the need for it, and I think everybody in the House would live to regret the day that this Bill was passed. I know that emergency powers have been used in the past, long ago—1938 was the last time. At that point, there was a consensus on both sides of the House that a Bill needed to be passed and there was urgency to do so. A resolution was needed and a decision needed to be made, which is why emergency powers were used. However, I believe that we will rue this day.

I understand why my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) has done this. We have talked today about the fact that the Prime Minister has applied for her extension. Who knows what the news will be by the end of today, given how fast things are changing? However, I do not believe that my right

hon. Friend cares much about what happens or what the Prime Minister is doing. I think that his mistrust lies with the EU itself. I think he believes that perhaps the EU will simply not grant that extension and will push the UK, by accident, into no deal, and we will be unable to prevent that from happening. My right hon. Friend is sitting behind me, and I have no idea whether or not he is nodding, but I understand his reasons, even though I do not agree with them.

Members have said here today that there is a division in the country—in families, in communities, in businesses—but I do not believe that that is the case any more. I believe that that strongly was the case post-referendum, but as time has passed, people have no longer said to me, “Just get this over the line with no deal,” or, “Just get this over the line with a customs union and a single market attached,” or, “Just get this over the line with ‘a’ customs union, not ‘the’ customs union.” What people say to me now is that they have utter disdain for Parliament and for us. It is a plague on all our houses that, following the referendum, we are here today passing bits of tacky legislation to prevent ourselves from delivering on what the British public—according to their sovereign right—asked us to do, which was to enact their democratic vote to leave the European Union.

I voted for the Prime Minister's deal, once I had received legal assurances from the Attorney General on its second outing. The right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) said in his speech that he did not vote for that deal—for the withdrawal agreement—because he did not like the political declaration and the ambiguity contained therein. Well, the Prime Minister separated the political declaration from the deal and brought it back, and he still voted against it. At no time have Opposition Members, apart from five of them, voted to deliver on the result of the referendum.

However, I do not exclude Conservative Members from my exhortation. There are Members on these Benches who want only, and nothing but, to pursue the holy grail of a no deal. There are Members who are trying to prevent Brexit from happening at all. We in this place owe it to the British people to reach a consensus and to deliver on the result of that referendum, because at the moment they are not divided in their utter disdain for this place and for Members on both sides of the House. None of us is free from that, and none of us is excused from it.

I will not support the Bill tonight. I think that what we should all have done was support the Prime Minister's deal. If at the time of its second presentation everyone in the House had supported it, the country would have a different opinion of us today. We would have delivered what the country wanted, and, using the political declaration for the purpose of a future working partnership, and using those attached documents with the ambiguity contained therein, we could have negotiated what would have been the best deal for Britain. But we blew it—we did not do it—and I am afraid that that is shame on both sides of the House.

I am sorry that this Bill has come forward. There will come a day, whether it is five, 10 or 20 years from now—most likely 20 years, I think—when Members on the Opposition Benches will be over here and we will be over there, and we will use this against them. We will use it to our advantage. If they vote for the Bill tonight and it is passed, they should bear that in mind—they will rue this day.

4.54 pm

Sir Robert Syms (Poole) (Con): I am not against constitutional innovation—as somebody who came from local government where we controlled the money in the local council, I have always felt this Chamber ought to do more of that on money—but I am unhappy about what is happening today because of the rushed way it is being put through. I have always wondered how we would end Brexit, and it always seemed to me that it would be on a wet Wednesday when somebody worrying about a no-deal Brexit in a few days' time would in the most moderate and reasonable terms—I respect my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), who is one of the most reasonable, articulate people in this House—put forward the idea that for a brief moment of time, Parliament has to take control in some way to stop us leaving.

However, the Bill does not have a back date on it, and we need to debate that. The reason is that once that Bill goes on to the statute book and becomes a device, it can be used at any time to extend the exit date. I do not think this Parliament would ever vote to revoke article 50, but I do think it might, out of indecision, extend and extend and extend. That is why we need a full debate, because eventually the salience of the referendum could drop and people start to say, “We can't make up our mind; let's stay.”

That is why at some point we have to make a decision, and that time is fast coming, but I do not agree with my right hon. Friend. My fear is that this is an enabling Act and a device, and it needs full debate of more than one day so that we can bottom out what the impact is. We have had days and months of debate—massive debate on article 50 and withdrawal Bills—but this small device could well keep us in the EU for month after month after month after year. That is my fear.

I respect my right hon. Friend—he wants to leave the EU; he does not want to leave as quickly as I do, but he wants to leave the EU. However, a lot of the people voting for this device do not want to leave the EU; they want to stay. I respect them using this device, but I think it would be a grave mistake if we passed it today.

So the House taking control is fine—well done—but my concern is that putting this Bill through may well have the unintended consequence of allowing the exercise whereby 33.5 million people went out to vote to be set aside because we will start to worry about how it will bottom out. That is wrong. It is fundamentally wrong in principle, and if we are going to do this we need to do it with full debate over days so that we can bottom out what the impact of this enabling legislation will be.

4.57 pm

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): I am conscious that you will, of course, bring this debate to a close at 5 o'clock, Mr Speaker.

I will be voting against the business of the House motion. We hear that we are in a great emergency that means we need to use these procedures; those who strongly oppose a no-deal Brexit say it is such an emergency that we have to use procedures that we normally use only in cases where we are having to legislate because of the absence of a devolved Assembly in Northern Ireland or because of a major national crisis. If they felt that strongly about this prospect, there

was an opportunity for them to avoid it on Friday by voting for the withdrawal agreement, which would have removed the prospect of a no-deal Brexit completely.

I am concerned about the precedent that would be set this afternoon by our using this type of mechanism to push through a Back-Bench Bill on a major piece of public policy. I share the concerns of my hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Sir Robert Syms) that it could well be used to try to constantly kick the can down the road, with lengthy extensions, because of Members not actually wanting to revoke article 50 but wanting in effect to keep us in the EU via the back door.

I listened with great interest to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash), who as always showed his constitutional expertise and again outlined why this is such a big change and should not be dealt with in this manner. To be candid, while this is not the longest Bill, it is a significant one, which means we should be having longer to debate it and particularly some time to at least reasonably consider amendments to it, rather than what is being proposed in this business of the House motion.

As other Members have said, using this procedure sets a precedent, whether those behind it like it or not. It will be interesting to see whether we get complaints from some of those who have been so keen to argue for this business of the House motion today if a similar process is used to push through a withdrawal agreement Bill. I suspect that the very same people would complain and demand more time.

It is ironic that Members on the Government Benches should be arguing for more time to debate, whereas Opposition Members seem to want to close down the debate. Mr Speaker, I can see you moving forward ready to put the Question. I will certainly vote against the motion, as it sets a worrying precedent. It takes us to a place where we normally go only when there is genuine consensus, which there clearly is not in this debate. It sets a precedent that I certainly do not wish to set.

5 pm

The Speaker put the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that time (Order, 1 April).

Amendment proposed: (a), at end, to add—

“(20) At the sitting on Monday 8 April –

- (a) Standing Order No. 14(1) (which provides that government business shall have precedence at every sitting save as provided in that order) shall not apply;
- (b) precedence shall be given to motions relating to the United Kingdom's withdrawal from and future relationship with the European Union other than any motion under section 13(1)(b) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018;
- (c) notwithstanding the practice of the House, any motion on matters that have been the subject of a prior decision of the House in the current Session may be the subject of a decision;
- (d) the Speaker shall interrupt proceedings on any business before those motions at 5.00 pm and shall announce his decision on which motions have been selected for decision by recorded vote before calling a Member to move a motion having precedence;
- (e) the Speaker may not propose the question on any amendment to any motion subject to decision by recorded vote or on the previous question, and may

not put any question under Standing Order No. 36 (Closure of debate) or Standing Order No. 163 (Motion to sit in private);

- (f) debate on the motions having precedence may continue until 8.00 pm at which time the House shall proceed as if the question had been put on each motion selected by the Speaker for decision by recorded vote and the opinion of the Speaker as to the decision on each such question had been challenged;
- (g) in respect of those questions –
 - (i) Members may record their votes on each question under arrangements made by the Speaker;
 - (ii) votes may be recorded for half an hour after the Speaker declares the period open and the Speaker shall suspend the House for that period;
 - (iii) the Speaker shall announce the results in the course of the sitting;
- (h) during the period between 8.00 pm and the announcement of the results on the questions subject to recorded vote–
 - (i) no motion for the adjournment may be made;
 - (ii) the Speaker may suspend the sitting if any other business, including proceedings provided for in sub-paragraph (i) of this paragraph, has been concluded.
- (i) any proceedings interrupted or superseded by this order may be resumed or (as the case may be) entered upon and proceeded with after the moment of interruption.”—(Hilary Benn.)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House proceeded to a Division.

Sir Patrick McLoughlin: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Perhaps you could inform the House of what is happening.

Mr Speaker: I have never accused the right hon. Gentleman of being impatient. I was minded to do that very soon, and I completely understand why he, and everyone else, wants resolution. There was a degree of uncertainty; that explains the delay. In the circumstances, I thought it courteous and proper to ask that the two Chief Whips confer, but I did indicate that the exchange between them should be brief, so I hope to be able to announce the situation to the House extremely soon. I quite understand why the right hon. Gentleman wants to get on with matters; so do I, but I want to do so in a way that is proper.

Mr Francois: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker —[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: No, no; it is fair enough and perfectly proper. I call Mr Mark Francois on a point of order.

Mr Francois: Mr Speaker, there are rumours that it is a tie, in which case could we have a people's vote and do the Division twice?

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his point of order. I will not comment on rumours. He has had his fun. I hope he has enjoyed himself, and I am glad that he has preserved his sense of humour. A resolution will be achieved very soon; patience is rewarded.

Sir William Cash *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Meanwhile, the epitome of solemnity, Sir William Cash.

Sir William Cash: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. If it turns out to be a tie, and I have no idea if it is—

Mr Speaker: Order. May I very politely suggest to the hon. Gentleman, whom I always treat with the utmost courtesy and respect, that rather than asking me what will be, he just waits for a very short time? I know exactly what the situation is in the as yet hypothetical scenario that he describes, and I will give a very clear ruling to the House. If he is still unclear or dissatisfied after that, he can come back at me.

The House having divided: Ayes 310, Noes 310.

Division No. 402]

[5 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Coyle, Neil
Abrahams, Debbie	Crausby, Sir David
Ali, Rushanara	Crawley, Angela
Allen, Heidi	Creagh, Mary
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Creasy, Stella
Amesbury, Mike	Cruddas, Jon
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Cryer, John
Ashworth, Jonathan	Cummins, Judith
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Cunningham, Alex
Bardell, Hannah	Cunningham, Mr Jim
Bebb, Guto	Dakin, Nic
Beckett, rh Margaret	Davey, rh Sir Edward
Benn, rh Hilary	David, Wayne
Berger, Luciana (<i>Proxy vote cast by Mr Chris Leslie</i>)	Davies, Geraint
Betts, Mr Clive	Day, Martyn
Black, Mhairi	De Cordova, Marsha
Blackford, rh Ian	De Piero, Gloria
Blackman, Kirsty	Debbonaire, Thangam
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta	Dent Coad, Emma
Blomfield, Paul	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Boles, Nick	Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Brabin, Tracy	Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Dodds, Anneliese
Brake, rh Tom	Doughty, Stephen
Brennan, Kevin	Dowd, Peter
Brock, Deidre	Drew, Dr David
Brown, Alan	Dromey, Jack
Brown, Lyn	Duffield, Rosie
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Eagle, Ms Angela
Bryant, Chris	Eagle, Maria
Buck, Ms Karen	Edwards, Jonathan
Burden, Richard	Efford, Clive
Burgon, Richard	Elliott, Julie
Butler, Dawn	Ellman, Dame Louise
Byrne, rh Liam	Elmore, Chris
Cable, rh Sir Vince	Esterson, Bill
Cadbury, Ruth	Evans, Chris
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Farrelly, Paul
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Farron, Tim
Carden, Dan	Fellows, Marion
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Fitzpatrick, Jim
Champion, Sarah	Fletcher, Colleen
Chapman, Douglas	Fovargue, Yvonne
Chapman, Jenny	Foxcroft, Vicky
Charalambous, Bambos	Freeman, George
Cherry, Joanna	Frith, James
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth	Furniss, Gill
Clwyd, rh Ann	Gaffney, Hugh
Coaker, Vernon	Gapes, Mike
Coffey, Ann	Gardiner, Barry
Cooper, Julie	George, Ruth
Cooper, rh Yvette	Gethins, Stephen
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Gibson, Patricia
Cowan, Ronnie	Gill, Preet Kaur
	Glindon, Mary

Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Goodman, Helen
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Green, Kate
 Greening, rh Justine
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffith, Nia
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Gymmah, Mr Sam
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayman, Sue
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hermon, Lady
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Darren (*Proxy vote cast by Kerry McCarthy*)
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca

Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian C.
 Lynch, Holly
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pidcock, Laura
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette

Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast by Vicky Foxcroft*)
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Owen
 Smyth, Karin
 Sobel, Alex
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison

Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Thelma
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Williamson, Chris
 Wilson, Phil
 Wishart, Pete
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Woodcock, John
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Jeff Smith and
 Nick Smith**

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Austin, Ian
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, Conor
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Cooper, Rosie
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Docherty, Leo
 Dodds, rh Nigel
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard

Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, rh Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Field, rh Frank
 Field, rh Mark
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freer, Mike
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy

Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pngelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, John
 Mann, Scott
 Masterton, Paul
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy

Paisley, Ian
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, rh Claire
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Rutley, David
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Snell, Gareth
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Spencer, Mark

Stephenson, Andrew
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomson, Ross
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy

Tellers for the Noes:
Amanda Milling and
Rebecca Harris

Mr Speaker: Order. In accordance with precedent, and on the principle that important decisions should not be taken except by a majority, I cast my vote with the Noes, so the Noes have it. By casting vote, it is 311 to 310. That is the proper way in which to proceed.

Question accordingly negated.

Sir Patrick McLoughlin: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I cannot recall when this situation last happened. I am sure that you have been told of the precedent, so perhaps you would like to inform the House.

Mr Speaker: In my recollection—I have been saying this to audiences across the country for years, so I hope it is right—the last occasion on which the Speaker had to exercise a casting vote was in 1993. I will be corrected by the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) if I am wrong, but I believe that it was appertaining to the Maastricht treaty Bill. I say to the right hon. Member for Derbyshire Dales (Sir Patrick McLoughlin) that I am probably pushing my luck here in the face of such an established authority as the hon. Member for Stone, but I think that it was on an amendment in the name of

[Mr Speaker]

the then Leader of the Opposition relating to the social chapter. Speaker Boothroyd cast her vote in the way that she did, against that amendment.

The rationale—I say this as much for the benefit of new Member as of others—for the exercise of the casting vote is, as I have said, that it is not for the Chair to create a majority that does not otherwise exist. The way in which the casting vote is exercised also depends on the stage at which a matter is being aired. For example, it could be, and probably would be, exercised differently on Second Reading of a Bill, because there is an important principle of encouraging further debate. It might then be used to send a Bill into Committee when it is not going to get on to the statute book straight away. If it was the final stage of the Bill, the casting vote would be against. In a situation in which a decision would be made that a day would be allocated for particular business, I judge that it is not right for me to make that decision if the House has not done so by a clear majority. I hope that that is clear and generally acceptable.

Hon. Members: More!

Mr Speaker: No more required; I am being teased mercilessly by the hon. Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton) and possibly by others—[*Interruption.*] I thought it was he, but anyway, people were saying, “More!” They do not want more, although I think that the hon. Member for Stone usually does.

Sir William Cash: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Let me simply say that I quite understand the way in which that decision was arrived at. I did refer briefly to Speaker Denison’s rule. Of course, it so happens that this particular Bill should be about the European issue, on which the Maastricht treaty was also extremely important.

Mr Speaker: I do not want to tease the hon. Gentleman, but I think that Hugo Young’s book has a whole chapter about him. The hon. Gentleman is not only an historical figure; some people might think that he is a world historical figure.

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Ind): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. Those of us who took part in that vote in 1993 will recall that Speaker Boothroyd cast her vote in favour of the Government because there was thought to be a tie. It was discovered the next day that the Government had in fact won the vote by a majority of one, and that therefore the Speaker had complied with what would have happened anyway. Can we be certain that this tie is accurate? [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. I understand that Members want to move on, but we must hear the rest of the point of order.

Mike Gapes: If we discover subsequently that there has been an inaccuracy, will we be able to revisit this exact motion in future?

Mr Speaker: None of us—myself included—has Kantian perfect information on the subject, and I witnessed that there was some uncertainty. What I can vouchsafe to the hon. Gentleman, without causing any offence, is that in so far as there was some uncertainty about the

vote, it was about whether it was 310 each or whether, as in the view of one Government Whip—it was not advanced with great certainty—the Government might have secured 311 votes. I do not think that there is any suggestion that the decision has worked against the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn). In the event that there was an error, I think that I will resort to the Willie Whitelaw defence at this stage: let us cross that bridge if we come to it. I am not anticipating that we will do so. I thought it prudent to ask the Government and Opposition Chief Whips to confirm, and they did so amicably, as far as I know, and appeared to reach an agreed conclusion. There is no need to create a row, on top of all other rows, where there is none.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. That is also my understanding of what happened in 1993, but can you clarify, just for the House’s information, whether the result of the vote that has just been announced is based on the Whips’ count or on the Clerks’ count?

Mr Speaker: The answer is that it is based on the Whips’ count, but the Clerks’ count is the same. I am not inviting the hon. Gentleman to put that in his pipe and smoke it, because I am sure that he does not have a pipe and, as far as I know, he does not smoke. Nevertheless, I have given him an answer, which I hope sates his appetite for further inquiry.

Main Question put.

The House divided: Ayes 312, Noes 311.

Division No. 403]

[5.38 pm]

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Byrne, rh Liam
Abrahams, Debbie	Cable, rh Sir Vince
Ali, Rushanara	Cadbury, Ruth
Allen, Heidi	Cameron, Dr Lisa
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Amesbury, Mike	Carden, Dan
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Ashworth, Jonathan	Champion, Sarah
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Chapman, Douglas
Bardell, Hannah	Chapman, Jenny
Bebb, Guto	Charalambous, Bambos
Beckett, rh Margaret	Cherry, Joanna
Benn, rh Hilary	Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Berger, Luciana (<i>Proxy vote cast by Mr Chris Leslie</i>)	Clwyd, rh Ann
Betts, Mr Clive	Coaker, Vernon
Black, Mhairi	Coffey, Ann
Blackford, rh Ian	Cooper, Julie
Blackman, Kirsty	Cooper, rh Yvette
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta	Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Blomfield, Paul	Cowan, Ronnie
Boles, Nick	Coyle, Neil
Brabin, Tracy	Crausby, Sir David
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Crawley, Angela
Brake, rh Tom	Creagh, Mary
Brennan, Kevin	Creasy, Stella
Brock, Deidre	Cruddas, Jon
Brown, Alan	Cryer, John
Brown, Lyn	Cummins, Judith
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Cunningham, Alex
Bryant, Chris	Cunningham, Mr Jim
Buck, Ms Karen	Daby, Janet
Burden, Richard	Dakin, Nic
Burgon, Richard	Davey, rh Sir Edward
Butler, Dawn	David, Wayne
	Davies, Geraint

Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhési, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Drew, Dr David
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Fellows, Marion
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Freeman, George
 Frith, James
 Furniss, Gill
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 George, Ruth
 Gethins, Stephen
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glindon, Mary
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Goodman, Helen
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Green, Kate
 Greening, rh Justine
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffith, Nia
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayman, Sue
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hermon, Lady
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret

Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Darren (*Proxy vote cast by Kerry McCarthy*)
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian C.
 Lynch, Holly
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla

Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pidcock, Laura
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast by Vicky Foxcroft*)
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth

Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Owen
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Sobel, Alex
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Thelma
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Williamson, Chris
 Wilson, Phil
 Wishart, Pete
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Woodcock, John
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:

Jeff Smith and
 Nick Smith

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Austin, Ian
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew

Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, Conor
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Cartlidge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Cooper, Rosie
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Docherty, Leo
 Dodds, rh Nigel
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, rh Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Field, rh Frank
 Field, rh Mark
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freer, Mike
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat

Gibb, rh Nick
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkyins, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lefroy, Jeremy

Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, John
 Mann, Scott
 Masterton, Paul
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Paisley, Ian
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, rh Claire
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin

Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Rutley, David
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Spencer, Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomson, Ross
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
 Wendy Morton and
 Craig Whittaker

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That—

(1) At today's sitting—

- (a) the order of the House of 1 April (Business of the House) shall apply as if, at the end of paragraph (2)(a), there were inserted “and then to proceedings on the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 5) Bill”;
- (b) any proceedings governed by that order as amended or this order may be proceeded with until any hour, though opposed, and shall not be interrupted;
- (c) immediately upon the conclusion of proceedings under the order of 1 April, the Speaker shall call a Member to move the motion that the European Union (Withdrawal) (No.5) Bill be now read a second time;
- (d) the Speaker may not propose the question on the previous question, and may not put any question under Standing Order No. 36 (Closure of debate) or Standing Order No. 163 (Motion to sit in private);
- (e) any proceedings interrupted or superseded by this order may be resumed or (as the case may be) entered upon and proceeded with after the moment of interruption.

(2) In respect of the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 5) Bill, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.

(3) The provisions of this order shall apply to and in connection with the proceedings on the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 5) Bill.

Timetable for the Bill today

(4) (a) Proceedings on Second Reading and in Committee of the whole House, any proceedings on Consideration and proceedings up to and including Third Reading shall be taken at the sitting today in accordance with this Order.

- (b) Proceedings on Second Reading shall be brought to a conclusion (so far as not previously concluded) at 7.00 pm.
- (c) Proceedings in Committee of the whole House, any proceedings on Consideration and proceedings up to and including Third Reading shall be brought to a conclusion (so far as not previously concluded) at 10.00 pm.

Timing of proceedings and Questions to be put today

(5) When the Bill has been read a second time:

- (a) it shall, notwithstanding Standing Order No. 63 (Committal of bills not subject to a programme order), stand committed to a Committee of the whole House without any Question being put;
- (b) the Speaker shall leave the Chair whether or not notice of an Instruction has been given.

(6) (a) On the conclusion of proceedings in Committee of the whole House, the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

- (b) If the Bill is reported with amendments, the House shall proceed to consider the Bill as amended without any Question being put.

(7) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph (4), the Chairman or Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions in the same order as they would fall to be put if this Order did not apply—

- (a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;
- (b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed;
- (c) the Question on any amendment, new clause or new schedule selected by the Chair or Speaker for separate decision;
- (d) the Question on any amendment moved or Motion made by a designated Member;
- (e) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded; and shall not put any other Questions, other than the Question on any motion described in paragraph (16) of this Order.

(8) On a Motion made for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

Consideration of Lords Amendments and Messages on a subsequent day

(9) If any message on the Bill (other than a message that the House of Lords agrees with the Bill without amendment or agrees with any message from this House) is expected from the House of Lords on any future sitting day, the House shall not adjourn until that message has been received and any proceedings under paragraph (10) have been concluded.

(10) On any day on which such a message is received, if a designated Member indicates to the Speaker an intention to proceed to consider that message—

- (a) notwithstanding Standing Order No. 14(1) (which provides that government business shall have precedence at every sitting save as provided in that order), any Lords Amendments to the Bill or any further Message from the Lords on the Bill may be considered forthwith without any Question being put; and any proceedings interrupted for that purpose shall be suspended accordingly;
- (b) proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments or on any further Message from the Lords shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour after their commencement; and any proceedings suspended under subparagraph (a) shall thereupon be resumed;
- (c) the Speaker may not propose the question on the previous question, and may not put any question under Standing Order No. 36 (Closure of debate) or Standing Order No. 163 (Motion to sit in private).

(11) Paragraphs (2) to (7) of Standing Order No. 83F (Programme orders: conclusion of proceedings on consideration of Lords amendments) apply for the purposes of bringing any proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments to a conclusion as if:

- (a) any reference to a Minister of the Crown were a reference to a designated Member;
- (b) after paragraph (4)(a) there is inserted –
“(aa) the question on any amendment or motion selected by the Speaker for separate decision;”.

(12) Paragraphs (2) to (5) of Standing Order No. 83G (Programme orders: conclusion of proceedings on further messages from the Lords) apply for the purposes of bringing any proceedings on consideration of a Lords Message to a conclusion as if:

- (a) any reference to a Minister of the Crown were a reference to a designated Member;
- (b) in paragraph (5), the words “subject to paragraphs (6) and (7)” were omitted.

Reasons Committee

(13) Paragraphs (2) to (6) of Standing Order No. 83H (Programme orders: reasons committee) apply in relation to any committee to be appointed to draw up reasons after proceedings have been brought to a conclusion in accordance with this Order as if any reference to a Minister of the Crown were a reference to a designated Member.

Miscellaneous

(14) Standing Order No. 82 (Business Committee) shall not apply in relation to any proceedings on the Bill to which this Order applies.

(15) No Motion shall be made, except by a designated Member, to alter the order in which any proceedings on the Bill are taken, to recommit the Bill or to vary or supplement the provisions of this Order.

(16) (a) No dilatory Motion shall be made in relation to proceedings on the Bill to which this Order applies except by a designated Member.

- (b) The Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(17) Proceedings to which this Order applies shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(18) No private business may be considered at any sitting to which the provisions of this order apply.

(19) In this Order, “a designated Member” means –

- (a) the Member in charge of the Bill; and
- (b) any other Member backing the Bill and acting on behalf of that Member.

European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 5) Bill

Second Reading

5.54 pm

Mr Speaker: Under the terms of the business of the House motion to which the House has just agreed, amendments for the Committee stage of the Bill may now be accepted by the Clerks at the Table. An amendment paper containing all amendments tabled up until 6.15 pm today, and the names of signatories, will be available in the Vote Office and on the parliamentary website by 7 pm. Members may continue to table amendments up until the start of proceedings in Committee of the whole House. If necessary, an updated amendment paper will be made available as soon as possible during proceedings in Committee. For the benefit of everyone, however, I would encourage Members to table their amendments as soon as possible. The Chairman of Ways and Means will take a provisional decision on selection and grouping on the basis of amendments tabled by 6.15 pm, and that provisional selection list will be made available in the Vote Office and on the parliamentary website before the start of proceedings in Committee.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I wish to raise a point of order regarding the need for a money resolution under the Standing Orders in respect of the Bill. For example, if the Bill was to result in a very great extension, the cost could be £36 billion of taxpayers’ money. Fifty MPs have written to you, Mr Speaker, in my name and theirs, in the belief that a money resolution is required, particularly as the matter is apparently decided by the Clerks of the House of Commons. That raises a question for the Procedure Committee as to whether or not there should be a money resolution. I therefore ask you, Mr Speaker, first of all, what is your conclusion on that, as advised; and, secondly, whether the matter can be referred to the Procedure Committee, because in my judgment it is completely unacceptable for matters to be decided in this way?

Mr Speaker: I will respond to the hon. Gentleman, but I will first hear the point of order by the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Helen Goodman).

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. The contention of the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) that the Bill could cost £36 billion is, of course, highly controversial. It could equally be argued that crashing out with no deal would cost as much, if not more. In that case, it seems to me that what has happened hitherto and the advice from the Clerks has been wholly proper.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I do not want to get into the argument about what the Bill is going to cost, but as a member of the Procedure Committee I do think it is an arguable contention that when we are indulging in such constitutional innovations the matter should go to the Procedure Committee first. Otherwise, what is the point of the Procedure Committee?

Mr Speaker: I will take a final point of order, but I am quite keen to give a ruling on this matter.

Helen Goodman: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I am also a member of the Procedure Committee and we did have some preliminary discussion about this matter, which Sir Edward, unfortunately, did not attend.

Mr Speaker: It is not for the Chair to pronounce judgment on the attendance record of right hon. and hon. Members at Committees. Suffice to say that I have heard points of order from the hon. Members for Stone (Sir William Cash) and for Bishop Auckland (Helen Goodman) and the right hon. Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh), and the House has heard what they have had to say. If there are no further points of order—[*Interruption.*] Oh, very well.

Mr Shailesh Vara (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. This is on another matter.

Mr Speaker: I would rather deal with this matter. I think it is more orderly to deal with it in that way. If there are no further points of order on this matter, I will—[*Interruption.*] I beg the pardon of the hon. Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg).

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I thought this matter would come at a later stage, because on private Members' Bill Fridays we do not have money resolutions until Bills need to go into Committee. The money resolution is given at that stage. It is the case that a Bill cannot proceed out of Committee without a money resolution, not Second Reading, is it not?

Mr Speaker: That is true, but I say to the hon. Gentleman that there is no automatic or compelling obstacle to the House treating of the matter now. I judged, in consultation with the hon. Member for Stone, that it might be for the convenience of the House—particularly a relatively full House, at this time—for me to say something about the matter now on the back of what he has said. The alternative was for him to expatiate on this point in the course of any speech that he might make on Second Reading.

Of course, the two are not mutually exclusive, but I am sure that the hon. Member for North East Somerset would agree that for me then to interrupt the Second Reading debate to respond to the point would be a rather ungainly way in which to proceed. I thought it better to treat of the matter now, before we embark on Second Reading. I have heard his point, and I respect it, but I do not think it is conclusive.

Mr Vara: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I seek your advice, because many of the people who wish to have the debate that we are about to have argue that the mandate—[*Interruption.*] Mr Speaker, I am trying. They argue that the mandate given by a margin of a million people in a referendum was not sufficient. They also argue that a 4% margin was not sufficient, in percentage terms. Could you therefore advise me as to the appropriateness of carrying on a debate that has got through on one solitary vote?

Mr Speaker: Yes, I can. The answer is that procedural propriety in the House has got absolutely nothing to do with numbers for or against a particular proposition,

either in a referendum or in a general election. I say to the hon. Gentleman with great courtesy, because he is among the most courteous Members of this House, that he has made what might be thought by some people to be a very good polemical or campaigning point, but—I think he and I did O-levels, and I say this to him with some trepidation, because he is an extremely intelligent man—in procedural terms, I am afraid his observation would not warrant anything better at O-level than an unclassified. I am sorry. He has made an important campaigning point, but not a procedural one; I do not say that in any spirit of unkindness.

Mr Vara: For the record, Mr Speaker, I got better than unclassified in politics.

Mr Speaker: I am absolutely certain that the hon. Gentleman got vastly better than unclassified in everything. As I said, he is a very clever man. My point was about this issue, not about his intelligence.

If there are no further points of order on this matter, I will now give a definitive ruling on which, as I have been advised, no further points of order will arise. We will then proceed to the business before us.

As the hon. Member for Stone knows, the view taken by the Clerk of Legislation, who decides these matters in the first instance, is that neither Queen's consent nor any financial resolution is required for the private Member's Bill presented by the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper). Under the terms of the Bill, if enacted, the Prime Minister "must" move a motion agreeing that she should seek an extension of the negotiating period under article 50(3) of the treaty on European Union to a specified date. The Bill requires the Prime Minister to have the approval of the House before agreeing an extension of the negotiating period. An extension could come into effect only if the European Union 27 decided unanimously to agree an extension with the UK.

As the House will recall, no Queen's consent was required for the contents of the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill, which was introduced in January 2017 after the UK Supreme Court decision in the Miller case. My ruling is that as no prerogative consent was required for the Bill in 2017 giving parliamentary authority to the Prime Minister to take action under article 50 of the treaty on European Union, there is no requirement for new and separate prerogative consent to be sought for legislation in 2019 on what further action the Prime Minister should take under the same article 50 of the treaty on European Union.

I recognise, colleagues, that extending the period under article 50 would, in effect, continue the UK's rights and obligations as a member state of the EU for the period of the extension, which would have substantial consequences for both spending and taxation. I am satisfied that the financial resolutions passed on Monday 11 September 2017 give fully adequate cover for the exercise by Ministers of their powers under section 20(3) and (4) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 to move exit day in order to keep in lockstep with the date for the expiry of the European treaties, which of course is determined by article 50 of the treaty on European Union. This has been demonstrated by the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 (Exit Day) (Amendment) Regulations 2019, with which I know the hon. Member for Stone is keenly familiar, and which

[Mr Speaker]

were laid before this House on 25 March and approved by the House on 27 March. Accordingly, my ruling is that the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 5) Bill does not require either a Ways and Means motion or a money resolution.

Sir William Cash *rose—*

Mr Speaker: Order. Forgive me; I have treated the hon. Gentleman with the utmost courtesy, as I always do, and I am happy to discuss the matter further with him. However, that is a ruling on advice, to which very careful thought has been given, and we cannot debate it further. We must now proceed with the business.

6.5 pm

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I start by welcoming some of the words of the Prime Minister from yesterday. She said as part of her announcement:

“This is a difficult time for everyone. Passions are running high on all sides of the argument”,

and that debate and division is

“putting Members of Parliament and everyone else under...pressure...and...doing damage to our politics.”

I think we all recognise the pressures that she is talking about and the efforts that Members on both sides of the House, and with all kinds of different views on Brexit, are making to do the right thing in the national interest, to do the right thing whatever their different views on Brexit, and to do the right thing for their constituents. I hope that the very respectful and thoughtful tone of the debate that we had on the programme motion will be continued in this debate.

We have put forward this cross-party Bill to avert no deal on 12 April. We have done so for fear of the damage that no deal would do to all our constituencies. We understand that the Cabinet Secretary and National Security Adviser to the Government, Sir Mark Sedwill, told the Cabinet yesterday that no deal would make our country “less safe”. The Cabinet has a responsibility to listen to that advice and I am extremely glad that it did. We understand, too, that the Cabinet was warned that food prices would go up by 10% in the event of no deal. Again, I am glad that it listened to that advice because that would have a huge impact on overstretched families across the country.

Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con): I endorse and thank the right hon. Lady for the tone in which she has brought in the Bill. However, given that she has been one of the people who has most vociferously argued for long periods of scrutiny over our decision to leave the European Union, why does she think that it is acceptable to take off the table a way out of the EU that very many people who voted to leave it believe to be the way in which we should leave? Given her previous demands for a long scrutiny process, why is this all being done with only a few hours of debate in this place?

Yvette Cooper: The hon. Gentleman is right that there is a tight timetable for the Bill. That is because there is a tight timetable for the House, facing the

deadline of 12 April and the European Council meeting that will take place. I will be honest: I could never have imagined when we started these debates that we would be in a situation where, nine days from Brexit day, nobody knows what is going to happen. That is causing huge concern and anxiety for businesses, families and people across the country. I will come on in a minute to the damage that no deal would do to my constituency and many others. We have a responsibility to ensure that we can avert it.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Yvette Cooper: I will give way a couple of times, but I am conscious that I want to make some progress as well on the Bill itself.

Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): I share my right hon. Friend's frustration that there was no time for more scrutiny, but would it not have come better from someone who had not just voted against an amendment that would have allowed us to discuss the matter again on Monday?

Yvette Cooper: It would have been better to have further discussions on Monday, but we are where we are. What is important today is ensuring that we can debate no deal.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Yvette Cooper: I will give way just three more times, and then I will make rapid progress.

Ms Nadine Dorries (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con): I have the greatest respect for the right hon. Lady's endeavours today and for what she is trying to achieve, but may I draw attention to one of the things that we have to do in the House, which she mentioned at the beginning of her speech? We are all used to battling for our ideologies here, and for our beliefs and for what we want. Is this not one of the rare occasions when it is appropriate for us to think not about what we believe in and what we fight for, but about what is right for the country? Some of us, both remainers and arch-leavers, need to compromise and meet somewhere in the middle.

Yvette Cooper: I completely agree. In fact, I proposed a cross-party commission to oversee the negotiations immediately after the referendum and again after the general election, because I was fearful that we would end up in gridlock, and I thought that the task would be performed best in a way that would build consensus.

Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): Surely we would not be in this position had the Prime Minister not run down the clock, and we would not be in this position had she reached out across the House sooner.

Yvette Cooper: The truth is that we have been trying to squeeze into a few days a process of consensus building that should have taken two years. It should have started a long time ago. That is why I think it so important to ensure that, just at the point at which we are trying to come together and build some consensus, we do not tumble off the edge of a cliff and end up doing unfair damage to our constituents.

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): The right hon. Lady is being very generous in giving way, and I appreciate the manner in which she has introduced the debate, but may I gently remind her that predictions about the consequences of voting to leave or no deal have proved very wrong in the past? We heard dire economic predictions in 2016—for instance, it was predicted that by Christmas that year 500,000 more people would be unemployed—but the economic reality has been very different. The predictions were wrong then, and I suggest to her that they are wrong now.

Yvette Cooper: I think the hon. Gentleman is talking about the assessments of the impact on confidence that were made immediately after the referendum. Those were very different from the assessments of the impact of, for instance, World Trade Organisation tariffs, which are very practical, because it is clear what the impact will be on numbers, or on border capacity if customs checks are necessary. Those practical measures have not yet come into being, and I hope that they will not, because frictionless trade is important to our constituencies.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): I am pleased to co-sponsor my right hon. Friend's Bill. I am pleased that it has had cross-party sponsorship from all the Members who want to prevent no deal because they have been listening to the CBI, the TUC and all the voices in our constituencies. Whatever our views on where Brexit goes, we all believe that we must avoid that catastrophic no deal, and whatever the progress of the Bill tonight, the House has resolved to avoid that.

Yvette Cooper: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Let me quickly tell the House about some of the points that have been made to me about why this is so important. No deal would mean that we would immediately lose access to the European arrest warrant and to crucial criminal databases. A Castleford police officer told me what no deal would mean and said "It is going to be incredibly difficult for me to do my job properly. Obviously with more serious offenders such as sex offenders who will travel, this is going to cause serious concern."

No deal will also mean the kind of border delays that have led the NHS to stockpile. A friend told me in Pontefract that he is waiting for radiotherapy for his cancer and does not know whether that treatment will be delayed because short-life isotopes cannot be stockpiled. Major manufacturers and producers in our area such as Burberry, Haribo and Teva have told me how hard they would be hit by WTO tariffs, customs checks and border delays. We should be standing up for British manufacturers abroad, not holding them back. Local small businesses in particular have told me how much they fear being dependent on imports. They simply do not have the margins and could end up going bust if their stock is delayed. Local trade unions have warned about the impact on jobs.

Perhaps what I fear most of all is the impact of no deal on some of the most overstretched families in my constituency. We have had to set up "hungry holiday clubs" for kids on free school meals who may go hungry in the Easter holidays. In Airedale, we have had support and free lunches for families and those families are going to struggle if there is a 10% hike in food prices; it is simply not fair on them.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Yvette Cooper: I am going to make some progress before giving way again because I have given way many times.

Therefore, I think we have a responsibility. I know that there are Members across this House and people across the country who say they would like to see no deal happen and to see it happen as soon as possible. I simply say that it will hit other people's lives and it is not fair. For the sake of the Castleford police officer, the Airedale families, the Pontefract and Normanton manufacturers and the small businesses and cancer patients across the country, we have a responsibility to make sure we have a system in place to prevent no deal on 12 April, just nine days away.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Yvette Cooper: Let me say something about the Prime Minister's process, and then I will give way again.

The Prime Minister has announced her intention to pursue an extension, but the reason for continuing with this Bill is that there is no clear process for how the decisions will be taken about the length of the extension and the context, and this Bill does the following. It provides some clarity about how those decisions about the length of the extension will be taken. It gives a role for this House in that process. It also ensures we do not just slip back into facing that no-deal cliff edge almost by accident because of the nature of the difficult conversations and the complexity of what we are all facing. Crucially, it will demonstrate to the EU parliamentary support for what the Prime Minister is asking for, and to be fair to the EU, given the turbulence we have had in this House at every stage of this process, it is quite reasonable for it to ask whether the Prime Minister has the support of the House in the things she is asking for.

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Ind): I congratulate the right hon. Lady on her Bill and the progress she has made thus far. She speaks clearly, based on evidence, and I am delighted that, as I expected from her, she has clearly listened to business. Does she agree that we can only assume that the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has also listened to business, and of course he has looked at the Government's own impact assessment of no deal and he claims it would be "ruinous" for our country? Does she think he is right?

Yvette Cooper: I think we should take seriously that assessment, and not just from Government Ministers but also from the CBI and the TUC, who have come together in a powerful way to say very strongly the damage that would be caused by us being simply left with no deal. Therefore many of us have been trying to make this process work and trying to come together, whether through proposals we have made through Select Committees for different Brexit policy options or the work we have done calling for consensus or putting forward indicative votes and options. A lot of work has been done but I hope we all share the view that we should avoid a no-deal Brexit.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Yvette Cooper: I am conscious of needing to finish. I will take just a final few interventions, as otherwise it would not be fair on those who wish to speak.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): The right hon. Lady knows I support the broad thrust of this Bill, but I am concerned that it does not say when the Prime Minister has to ask for an extension, and it also does not seem to provide for a situation where Parliament has asked her to go for an extension longer than 22 May but she does not want to do so. It does not seem to have enough teeth. Can the right hon. Lady address those points?

Yvette Cooper: It sets out that:

“On the day after the day on which this Act receives Royal Assent, the Prime Minister must move a motion in the House of Commons”.

It also provides for the Government to be mandated by what the House has voted for. This is a two-clause Bill and that is all it is; it is very simple. It requires the Prime Minister to put the motion to Parliament proposing an extension of article 50. It asks the Prime Minister to define in the motion the length of the extension. Parliament can debate the motion and can seek to amend it in the normal way, and the conclusion is binding on the Government. The Prime Minister has to take that to the EU. If the EU Council agrees, then that is resolved; if the EU Council proposes a different date, the Bill proposes for the Prime Minister to come back to the House with a new motion.

The Bill simply provides for a simple, practical and transparent process to underpin the Prime Minister's plan. It ensures that the extension has the support of the House of Commons, but also that we keep the parliamentary safeguard in place. So whatever is agreed by any further talks or indicative processes, or by the Prime Minister's approach, she herself has said nothing can be implemented by 12 April. She has recognised that she cannot implement anything in only nine days, which is why the extension is needed. This is a hugely important Bill.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): The right hon. Lady has clearly had conversations with senior police officers about the impact of leaving the European arrest warrant. Apparently, it takes an average of six weeks to process cases now, but that would become an average of six months. Would she like to speculate on the impact of that sort of delay on processing serious cases?

Yvette Cooper: The right hon. Gentleman is right. I have also heard that we can access criminal records using the European Criminal Records Information System—ECRIS—in a matter of days at the moment, but that that could take weeks as a result of leaving the EU. That evidence was given to the Select Committee.

Sir William Cash: Can the right hon. Lady tell the House how long the extension will be, because that is also a matter of principle? It is not just a matter of committing to it. What does she expect the words in square brackets in the Bill to be? Three months? Nine months? Two years? Secondly, does she agree that it is extraordinary that such an extended period would cost the British taxpayer billions and billions of pounds?

Mr Speaker: Order. I gently point out that there are three Front-Bench speeches to be heard, and that a number of other hon. and right hon. Members wish to speak in the debate. There is therefore a premium on brevity.

Yvette Cooper: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Bill deliberately does not specify that, because it should be for the Prime Minister to make a proposal. She has to go into the EU Council and do the negotiating. She also has to lead the process around indicative votes, so I think it is right that she should put this forward and that the House will then decide.

Caroline Flint (Don Valley) (Lab): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Yvette Cooper: I am conscious that those on the Front Benches need to speak, so I shall make my final point.

It is really important for people to come together, both as part of this process and in how we go forward, because the challenges that we face from the threat of no deal are very significant. Three years on from the referendum, the biggest problem for all of us is that so little has been done to heal the national Brexit divide or to bring people together. This is a major constitutional change, and, to be honest, if we do not make the effort to bring people together, whatever we conclude today, tomorrow or next week will not last because we will not have done the work to build consensus. We all know that there is no consensus on the best way forward at the moment—we hope we can reach it, but at the moment there is no agreement—but let us at least sustain our agreement on ruling out the worst way forward. I commend the Bill to the House.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I have just had a message chuntered to me from a Government Whip that the Secretary of State is content to wait for a period. The hon. Member for Cleethorpes (Martin Vickers) is the beneficiary.

6.23 pm

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I was only just beginning to write my speech, but I shall muddle along. Needless to say, as an almost lifelong Brexit supporter, I shall be speaking against the proposal. I recognise that there are Members across the House who quite genuinely did not want to leave the European Union and who believe that the best interests of our country are served by being a member of that Union. That is a perfectly honourable position. What I find objectionable, however, is that some are quite deliberately seeking to frustrate the will of the British people that was so clearly demonstrated in June 2016. In my constituency, there was a 70% vote to leave. I am pleased about that, because I was one of them. I have campaigned long and hard to achieve this. I know I do not look old enough, but I did actually vote in the 1975 referendum, and of course I voted to leave on that occasion.

Andrew Percy: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Martin Vickers: I will happily give way to my neighbour.

Andrew Percy: Is it not the case that many of our constituents, nearly 70% of whom voted to leave the European Union, as my hon. Friend says, now think that there is a stitch-up trying to deny the referendum result? That is a problem with Bills such as this. It is perfectly fine for people to talk about coming together, but when legislation proposed by people on the other

side of the campaign would deny a way of leaving the EU, our constituents will only feel that this place is more out of touch with them and that this is all one massive stitch-up.

Martin Vickers: My hon. Friend and constituency neighbour is absolutely right in his analysis.

Moving on, some people argue for a second referendum, or a so-called people's vote, as if the people did not vote on the first occasion.

Neil Parish (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): I am not my hon. Friend's constituency neighbour, but I thank him for letting me intervene. I agree that we had a people's vote in 2016. I campaigned and voted for remain, but we must respect the vote and get on with leaving the European Union. However, many Labour Members are thwarting that even though they campaigned on a manifesto commitment to leave the European Union.

Martin Vickers: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. Although he is not my neighbour, he is of course welcome to visit Cleethorpes at any time. He will be made most welcome.

I was moving on to talk about a second referendum and the uncertainty and division that it would cause. I ask those Members who think that it would resolve the issue what would happen if a rerun with 16.4 million people voting remain led to them winning on a lower turnout. Would that satisfy the 17.4 million who voted to leave in 2016? Of course not. The uncertainty and division would continue, and we would be battling on for another 20 or 30 years about our future in Europe.

We must remember that the 2016 referendum was, to a great extent, an emotional vote. We had "Project Fear" telling the people that they would be worse off and that taxes would rise within days—hours, even—of a decision. However, the people said, "That's fine. Let's look at that." We did not want to leave because of some potential downturn in our economy; it was a cultural issue. Our history, our structure of government, our Parliament and our judicial processes are all different, and we were having to make more and more changes to our established processes.

Antoinette Sandbach (Eddisbury) (Con): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. The vote itself was on our membership of the EU. It was not about our future relationship. All those emotional matters may well have been sold to the people during the campaign, but the vote itself was about our membership, so it cannot be prayed in aid when considering how our future relationship should be shaped.

Martin Vickers: Needless to say, I strongly disagree with my hon. Friend. The people voted to leave the structure of the economic union, and they wanted to slam the door closed. They wanted a clean break. They were not thinking about our future relationship; they said, "We've had enough of the existing relationship."

Mr Baron: My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. I am sure he will agree that in addition to the emotion the people were proved right, because despite the predictions of doom and gloom in 2016, the economic reality since is that we have had a strong period of

growth, and those investment decisions have been made in the full knowledge that we could be leaving with no deal on WTO terms.

Martin Vickers: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend.

They made that decision to leave, and they expected us to leave—they certainly expected us to be leaving in a lot less than three years. It has been suggested that if we go back and rerun the referendum, people will change their mind because of the economic arguments and so on. The reality is very different. We should recognise, as I recall the Attorney General saying on one of his outings in the House on this issue, that this has now come down to a political decision, and the political decision should follow the result of the referendum. There would be an enormous backlash against not just the party in power but the political classes if we are not seen to walk through the door before us marked "exit."

I urge the House to vote against Second Reading and to continue the battle. If we end up with no deal, so be it.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. I encourage colleagues to make speeches not exceeding three minutes. In fact, there will be a three-minute limit on Back-Bench speeches. The Front Benchers are going to be encouraged to be extremely brief. Lots of people want to speak and there is very little time.

6.30 pm

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I lend my support to this important Bill, which is a vital safety net to ensure that we do not crash out with no deal next week and that we have enough time to find a constructive way forward.

Many others have already spoken passionately about the impact that a no deal would have on business and on the most vulnerable. Of course, a no deal would hit the poorest communities hardest. I want to say a few words about two things. First, I think we would put the Good Friday agreement at risk if we did not pass this Bill, and we would risk greater insecurity and tension in Northern Ireland, which would be a criminal thing to do. I am inordinately shocked, even knowing what I know, that 14 members of the Cabinet appear to be positively enthusiastic about leaving with no deal—I cannot think of anything more irresponsible.

Secondly, a no deal would be a disaster for our environment. It would lead to a huge governance gap. Not only would we not have the environmental policies that have been key to protecting our environment in this country and that have come from Brussels, but we would also lack the crucial enforcement agencies.

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Caroline Lucas: I will not give way because I have been told that I have only three minutes.

There are huge further concerns about a no deal, crossing everything from security to medicines, fissile materials and pharmaceuticals. We often hear from Conservative Members that, somehow, crashing out of the EU would make it easier for us to make trade deals. If other countries are considering whether we are a

[Caroline Lucas]

potentially trustworthy partner, would they really want to conduct a trade deal with a partner that has crashed out of the EU and has presumably not even paid its divorce bill? I think it would make us look incredibly untrustworthy.

Finally, let us not have all this stuff about there being some kind of stitch-up to prevent us from leaving the EU. Conservative Members cannot possibly say what was in the minds of those who voted leave nearly three years ago. What we do know is that, in fact, those who voted leave represented 37% of the electorate, it was nearly three years ago and a no deal was not on the ballot paper. How on earth can we take such far-reaching action, which would cause so much damage to our constituents and our environment, on the basis of little over a third of the electorate nearly three years ago?

At the very least, this has to go back to the people. We cannot possibly pretend to be acting in their name unless we have the courtesy to go back and check that this is what they meant. Frankly, from everything I know from speaking to people across the country, they did not mean for the amount of devastation and destruction that would be caused to this country by crashing out of the EU with no deal, which is why this Bill is so important.

6.33 pm

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): I find it very strange, this condescending view that, “People did not know what they were voting for first time around, so we are going to give them a second vote. If we don’t like that result, we will give them a third and a fourth.” It is complete nonsense.

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Baron: No. Mr Speaker has told us to be brief, and I will be brief.

I ask the House to reflect for a moment and use moderation when it comes to this issue of so-called crashing out or falling off a cliff by leaving on no-deal WTO terms. I gently remind the House that in 2016 there were lots of dire predictions about what would happen if we voted to leave. We had predictions from the trade bodies, the business organisations and the Government—the Treasury Front Benchers. We had predictions of 500,000 extra unemployed by Christmas 2016, and the CBI came out with a figure of 950,000 extra unemployed within a couple of years. They all proved to be wrong, so much so that the Bank of England had to apologise.

What has happened since? We have had record low unemployment, record inward investment and record manufacturing output. I suggest to the House that the reason for that is that economic reality, trade and comparative advantage trump predictions. When we talk about comparative advantage, factors such as how low our corporation tax rates are compared with those in other countries, how much more flexible our labour markets are, our financial expertise, which is unrivalled—certainly within Europe—our research and development, and our top universities are more important, in aggregate, than WTO tariffs and leaving with no deal. The proof of the pudding is in the economic reality. We would all

agree that a low unemployment rate is terribly important, as high unemployment is one of the social evils in our society, and our unemployment rate is nearly half that of the EU average. That is the issue in point. We trade with many countries outside the EU, very profitably, on WTO, no-deal terms, so I suggest to the House that if we want to respect the referendum result, the triggering of article 50 and our election manifestos, we should be leaving the EU on 12 April on no-deal, WTO terms if we cannot agree a deal before then.

6.36 pm

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): I wish to say a few words about a conversation I had earlier today with business representatives from, among other places, Northern Ireland, who were worried—

Mr Speaker: About the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 5) Bill.

Tom Brake: Absolutely. This was specifically about the impact of no deal—this Bill is clearly about ruling out the possibility of no deal—and the concerns of these businesses about the impact of VAT being applied. They went much beyond that in terms of the impact of no deal on Northern Ireland, extending to, for example, security and the issue that I referred to earlier—the European arrest warrant. No deal would have an effect on labelling; there would be uncertainties as to whether a company that manufactures here but also has shops in other parts of Europe would need to change its labelling. Clearly, the impact of no deal goes far beyond some of the issues that have been raised today. I hope that this Bill will provide clarity on the extension. I am open about believing that the extension needs to be a lengthy one, of the sort businesses were talking to me about earlier today. That is one way of ruling out no deal.

Finally, I wish to mention something related to the point made by the spokesperson for the Greens, on the legitimacy of the vote of three years ago. Trade union legislation requires ballots to be rerun after six months to ensure that they are valid and that the views expressed in a ballot six months earlier remain valid six months on. Clearly, that could equally apply to a ballot that took place three years ago. I hope that we will allow this Bill to proceed through its Second Reading. I know that we have a number of amendments in Committee, one of which applies to a people’s vote. I hope that we will get to debate that shortly, too.

6.39 pm

Antoinette Sandbach (Eddisbury) (Con): I support the Bill for this reason: we are seeing the revisionism of history by European Research Group members, who claim that 17.4 million people voted for no deal. That was not on the ballot paper; what was on the ballot paper was our membership of the EU.

Many of us in the House triggered article 50 on the basis that we were saying to the EU that we would not remain a full member, but wanted a new relationship, one that might look like Norway or Switzerland, or to be in EFTA. That is what Vote Leave campaigned for on the campaign trail, and its electoral registration made it absolutely clear that the decision on the future relationship would be up to Parliament. Voters were voting to leave the political institutions of the EU—out

of the European Court of Justice and the ever closer union—but not ruling out the single market or the customs union.

Why has this House ruled out no deal? That is because we have faced the reality of what leaving with no deal would look like. We are due to do that in just over a week, with no process in place. If we are to change that, we need to change the law. Parliament has voted by 400 votes to 160 against no deal. The Bill is not undemocratic; it implements that decision. We have not ruled out leaving the EU, and are still leaving other options open for our future relationship.

I have supported the Prime Minister's deal three times. I have voted on behalf of my constituents to implement their decision in the referendum. The problem is the hard core of ideological WTO-ers who want to hold this House and the country to ransom. Distressed businesses in my constituency are saying that we must resolve this.

Sir William Cash: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Antoinette Sandbach: I am sorry, my hon. Friend has spoken many times.

Distressed employers in my constituency who are responsible for thousands of employees want a resolution. The Bill will give Parliament a proper say, in the event that we cannot get a resolution in the timeframes currently set out. Far from being undemocratic, this is about putting a process in place that allows us to implement a decision and to have time to look at the best way in which to implement our future relationship with the Europe. That is why I shall be voting for the Bill.

Mr Speaker: The time limit is reduced to two minutes.

6.42 pm

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): It is a real pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Eddisbury (Antoinette Sandbach), who has been one of the voices of sanity from the Government Benches throughout this debacle. Others, I am afraid, are living in cloud cuckoo land if they still believe that no deal will not be a disaster for the economy of these islands.

My constituency has the second biggest financial sector in the United Kingdom; two major universities, Heriot-Watt and Edinburgh Napier; and many businesses, small and large, which are concerned about the impact of a no-deal Brexit. And of course my constituents did not vote for Brexit at all: 72% of them voted to remain in the European Union.

I therefore support the general principle of the Bill. It has some serious shortcomings, but it is all that we have at the moment—our only insurance policy against a no-deal Brexit. I would have preferred to have seen something with far more teeth in it, such as my proposal on Monday, and I have a number of questions about the Bill that have yet to be answered.

I am worried that the Bill does not say when the Prime Minister has to ask for an extension of time. The European Council is next Wednesday, but the Bill does not state specifically whether she has to ask before then or on the day. What happens if the European Council gives us an extension with conditions attached, such as with a longer extension? Or what happens if the Prime Minister will not contemplate extending beyond 22 May

when Parliament has forced her to ask for a longer extension? The Bill seems to imply that she could sit on her hands. The Bill is ripe for a bit of amendment, and the SNP will certainly table some if we get to that stage.

Mr Speaker: I will call both remaining Back-Bench Members, but each will have no more than two minutes. The hon. Gentlemen must be reseated by 6.50 pm.

6.44 pm

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): I shall be very brief indeed; I want to make a point to which I have referred before. As my European Scrutiny Committee report made clear back in March last year, this entire process is being driven by the guidelines and the Government and Prime Minister's humiliating supplication to the European Union. That is true and clear. Furthermore, I point out the reversal of the position at Chequers, where the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, which had been overtaken by events, was, on a pre-planned basis, turned into a new arrangement that became the withdrawal agreement.

My final point is this: there is profound humiliation for the British people in our being required to do what the EU says. The Bill will ensure that the EU dictates the terms. As Sir Paul Lever, I and others have made clear over the years, things will be decided by Germany in the Council of Ministers and the European Council. Sir Paul says, as do I, that this is a German Europe, run by Germany; that is the bottom line, and that will be the case in relation to this decision as well.

Mr Speaker: Well, that is one of the shortest speeches the hon. Gentleman has ever delivered in the Chamber.

6.45 pm

Mr Bob Seely (Isle of Wight) (Con): I will not support the European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 5) Bill, because it means delay without end. Business wants certainty above all. I do not believe all the scare stories; sadly, the Treasury has been proved wrong in most of its assessments of Brexit. This Bill will simply be the water torture of endless delay.

I base my decision on two points. First, we have to honour the referendum result. That means voting for Brexit. I do so because the country voted for it; because my Island, the Isle of Wight, voted for it; and because the best way of improving the reputation of politics is for politicians to do what we said we would. The problem is that we are not doing that. This chaos is self-induced by people who do not want Brexit.

Secondly, we have to live in the real world, and that means accepting that this Parliament has a remain majority. It has been obvious for months that we would not get no deal through, and while I respect my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) and many other Brexiteer colleagues, I cannot think of a more perfect example of snatching defeat from the jaws of an acceptable victory. There has never been a chance of getting no deal through, as we are finding out.

We are not theologians. We need to cut a deal, not philosophise on the nature of Brexit perfection.

Sir William Cash: Rubbish.

Mr Seely: Thank you. I am flattered to have been criticised by Members on both sides; I know I am right.

I do not think the deal is too bad, and a vote on alternatives in a Strictly Come Brexit dance-off next week would be another well-meaning shambles. It is truly obvious—at this stage, mind-numbingly, stupefyingly obvious—that if we want to leave with a deal, we should vote for one.

6.47 pm

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): On 18 July 2018, the SNP became the first party in this Parliament to call for an extension of the article 50 deadline. The need for a real extension is more urgent now than it was then. Although we have a number of concerns about the wording of the Bill, we will compromise on those concerns just now, and support it. Hopefully, we can improve it at the next stage.

The Government are still trying to blackmail the House by insisting that the choice is between the Prime Minister's rotten deal and no deal at all. That claim is simply not true; revocation is still an option. We hope to amend the Bill to make that perfectly clear. I commend my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry) for the part she played in confirming that point in a court case on which Her Majesty's Government spent £150,000 of our money; they sent lawyers to the European Court just to tell it that the Government did not have a view on the matter under discussion, which seemed a good use of money.

Ironically, in the long term, possibly the best way to get the Brexit that people actually voted for would be to stop this insane process and start all over again before it is too late. I was disappointed that Labour did not fully support a motion that my right hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) put forward that would have done that. I hope that Labour accepts that that was a mistake, and will support a similar motion if they get the chance. Our concern is that the Bill leaves too much in the hands of a Prime Minister who cannot be trusted to get anything right; we will seek to get that amended as well.

We need a clear reason for the extension, and that will dictate how long the extension has to be. Our preference would be for an extension to allow a people's vote—not a rerun of the 2016 referendum, but a different vote on a different question. If the Government were confident that their withdrawal agreement had the support of the people, they would not run away so quickly from the chance to give people a say.

Earlier this afternoon, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber held up a copy of "Scotland's Place in Europe" in the House, and it was howled down by the Conservatives. They can laugh at it, but Scotland's place is in Europe, and Scotland will retain its proper place as a full, sovereign member of the family of European nations.

6.50 pm

Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab): I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) for their work on the Bill, and the way in which they introduced both the business motion and the Bill to the House.

Labour supports the Bill because it is necessary to fulfil the wishes of the House, which has voted down the Prime Minister's deal on three occasions and has also voted against leaving without a deal on three occasions.

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): Can my hon. Friend think of another time when the TUC and the CBI have both been as emphatic as they have been about the dangers of a no-deal Brexit?

Paul Blomfield: I cannot, and that underlines the importance of this Bill, which provides for the further extension of article 50, which is now inevitable. The Bill offers a legislative framework through which the House can have an effective role in the process of determining that extension.

Clearly, the Bill sits in the new context of the Prime Minister's statement late last night, in which she said that she was seeking talks with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition. Those talks have now begun. We welcome what the hon. Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles) described as a "late conversion to compromise", although we regret the damage that has been done to the economy and the credibility of this House by the Prime Minister not compromising sooner. It is an approach that she should have adopted long ago.

The Prime Minister could have adopted this approach almost three years ago, after the referendum, when the country decided by a painfully narrow margin to leave the EU, but not to rupture our relations with our closest neighbours, key allies and most important trading partners. She could have done so after the election, when she went to the country saying that Parliament was obstructing her and seeking a mandate for a hard Brexit, but lost her majority and failed to get the mandate. She could also have done so on any of the three occasions when her deal was defeated by the House, but she chose not to. We have consistently called on the Prime Minister to reach out to the sensible majority in the House and to unite the country, recognising that the people of this country include both the 52% and the 48%. But better late than never.

We also welcome the way in which the Prime Minister distanced herself last night from those kamikaze colleagues who, as she said,

"would like to leave with No Deal next week."

The House has expressed its clear view on leaving without a deal, and this Bill provides the legislative lock to ensure that the will of our sovereign Parliament is not frustrated. It also provides for the flexibility to ensure that we can accommodate whatever comes from the discussions between our parties and across the House over the next few days.

We have set out clearly the framework on which we will be seeking the compromise that the Prime Minister talked about last night: a permanent and comprehensive customs union; close alignment with the single market; dynamic alignment on rights and protections; clear commitments on participation in EU agencies and funding programmes; and unambiguous agreements on future security arrangements. We have also been clear in our support for a confirmatory public vote on any deal that comes about at this very late stage. We look forward to the further discussions on these issues, and we are pleased to give our full backing to this Bill.

6.53 pm

The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Stephen Barclay): We will oppose this Bill. It is being passed in haste, and the fact that we have a time limit of two minutes for a number of speeches this evening is an indication of the fact that the Bill is being passed in haste. It is constitutionally irregular and, frankly, it fails to understand the decision-making process by which any discussion of an extension or agreement of an extension at the European Council will be reached. I will come to that in the limited time I have in which to speak.

It is not just me who has concerns about the Bill on behalf of the Government. Objections to the Bill have been raised by the Chair of the European Scrutiny Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash); the Chair of the Procedure Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mr Walker); and the Chair of the Select Committee on Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin). All have raised concerns about the Bill—particularly the fact that it is being rushed through in such short order—and indeed about the precedent it sets for this and successive Governments.

The Bill also calls into question the royal prerogative. It has been a long-standing practice that Heads of Government can enter into international agreements without preconditions set by the House that would constrain their ability to negotiate in the national interest. Let me give an example of how such constraints could have adverse effects and, in particular, given that the House has voted against no deal, how the Bill could increase the risk of an accidental no-deal exit. On Wednesday 10 April the European Council could propose an extension of an alternative length, yet under the Bill the Prime Minister would then have to return on Thursday 11 April to put that proposal to the House. However, by 11 April the European Council will have concluded and the leaders will have returned to their member states. We would then need to confirm the UK's agreement to the European Council's decision and get its approval for that by 11 pm on 12 April.

At the heart of this is the fact that last Friday the House voted against the withdrawal agreement, which was the only legal right the House had to an extension to 22 May, which, as I understand it, Mr Speaker, was at the heart of your decision to grant that vote, because, as the Attorney General set out, that was an additional right bestowed on the House as a result of the previous European Council. We have no automatic right to a legal extension. That right was forgone as a result of the House's decision last Friday. Yet the Bill would put the House in the position of having to agree after the European Council has concluded and the leaders have returned to their member states.

Tom Brake: The right hon. Gentleman is generous in giving way. Who ran down the clock?

Stephen Barclay: It is not usually my practice to quote from *The Guardian*, but I suspect that it is the right hon. Gentleman's newspaper of choice. We all remember its front-page headline, "No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No."—it was quoted by many EU leaders—because this House failed to agree on the various options.

The Prime Minister has sought to compromise. Indeed, part of the challenge she has had with her deal is the fact that people on both wings of the debate feel that it is too much of a compromise. She has sought to compromise in the national interest, reflecting the fact, as Members have said, that 48% of the public did not vote to leave. That is why she reached out to the Leader of the Opposition, but for several weeks he refused to meet her. Indeed, he even refused to meet just because the hon. Member for Streatham (Chuka Umunna) happened to be in the room, which was apparently beyond the pale. I am pleased that today I was able to join the Prime Minister at a meeting with the Leader of the Opposition.

The fact that the House has consistently voted for what it is against, rather than what it is for, and indeed its decision on Friday not to approve the withdrawal agreement, is the very essence of running down the clock, because it waived our right to an extension to 22 May and therefore allowed an extension only to 12 April. It is very odd for the right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Tom Brake), having voted for that reduction in time, now to complain about it.

We are passing the Bill in haste and do not have adequate time to debate it in the manner that I would like us to—there is only one minute left on the clock. There are problems with the speed of its passage, the constitutional principle of it and the way it will interact with any decision reached by the Council that differs from the earlier decision taken by the House. I hope that the constitutional experts in the other place will address some of the Bill's flaws. It is because of those defects that the Government will oppose the Bill, and I urge Members to oppose this defective Bill.

7 pm

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The House divided: Ayes 315, Noes 310.

Division No. 404]**[7 pm****AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Brennan, Kevin
Abrahams, Debbie	Brine, Steve
Ali, Rushanara	Brock, Deidre
Allen, Heidi	Brown, Alan
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Brown, Lyn
Amesbury, Mike	Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Bryant, Chris
Ashworth, Jonathan	Buck, Ms Karen<pa>
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Burden, Richard
Bardell, Hannah	Burgon, Richard
Bebb, Guto	Butler, Dawn
Beckett, rh Margaret	Byrne, rh Liam
Benn, rh Hilary	Cable, rh Sir Vince
Berger, Luciana (<i>Proxy vote cast by Mr Chris Leslie</i>)	Cadbury, Ruth
Betts, Mr Clive	Cameron, Dr Lisa
Black, Mhairi	Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Blackford, rh Ian	Carden, Dan
Blackman, Kirsty	Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta	Champion, Sarah
Blomfield, Paul	Chapman, Douglas
Boles, Nick	Chapman, Jenny
Brabin, Tracy	Charalambous, Bambos
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Cherry, Joanna
Brake, rh Tom	Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
	Clwyd, rh Ann

Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ann
Cooper, Julie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crausby, Sir David
Crawley, Angela
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Alex
Cunningham, Mr Jim
Daby, Janet
Dakin, Nic
Davey, rh Sir Edward
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
De Piero, Gloria
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dent Coad, Emma
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Drew, Dr David
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellman, Dame Louise
Elmore, Chris
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farrelly, Paul
Farron, Tim
Fellows, Marion
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fletcher, Colleen
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Frith, James
Furniss, Gill
Gaffney, Hugh
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
George, Ruth
Gethins, Stephen
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glindon, Mary
Godsiff, Mr Roger
Goodman, Helen
Grady, Patrick
Grant, Peter
Gray, Neil
Green, Kate
Greening, rh Justine
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffith, Nia

Grogan, John
Gwynne, Andrew
Gyimah, Mr Sam
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanson, rh David
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Hayman, Sue
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hermon, Lady
Hill, Mike
Hillier, Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hosie, Stewart
Howarth, rh Mr George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, Diana
Jones, Darren (*Proxy vote cast by Kerry McCarthy*)
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Graham P.
Jones, Helen
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Sarah
Jones, Susan Elan
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, Afzal
Killen, Ged
Kinnock, Stephen
Kyle, Peter
Laird, Lesley
Lake, Ben
Lamb, rh Norman
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Lee, Karen
Lee, Dr Phillip
Leslie, Mr Chris
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Lewis, Mr Ivan
Linden, David
Lloyd, Stephen
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lucas, Ian C.
Lynch, Holly
MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Marsden, Gordon
Martin, Sandy
Maskell, Rachael

Matheson, Christian
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McInnes, Liz
McKinnell, Catherine
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Monaghan, Carol
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, rh Nicky
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Nandy, Lisa
Newlands, Gavin
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
O'Mara, Jared
Onasanya, Fiona
Onn, Melanie
Onwurah, Chi
Osamor, Kate
Owen, Albert
Peacock, Stephanie
Pearce, Teresa
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Toby
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Pidcock, Laura
Platt, Jo
Pollard, Luke
Pound, Stephen
Powell, Lucy
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rashid, Faisal
Rayner, Angela
Reed, Mr Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Emma
Reynolds, Jonathan
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Rodda, Matt
Rowley, Danielle
Ruane, Chris
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Ryan, rh Joan
Sandbach, Antoinette
Saville Roberts, rh Liz

Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheppard, Tommy
Sheriff, Paula
Shuker, Mr Gavin
Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast by Vicky Foxcroft*)
Skinner, Mr Dennis
Slaughter, Andy
Smeeth, Ruth
Smith, Angela
Smith, Cat
Smith, Eleanor
Smith, Laura
Smith, Owen
Smith, Karin
Snell, Gareth
Sobel, Alex
Soubry, rh Anna
Spellar, rh John
Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
Starmar, rh Keir
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeter, Wes
Sweeney, Mr Paul
Swinson, Jo
Tami, rh Mark
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Timms, rh Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Turley, Anna
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Stephen
Twist, Liz
Umunna, Chuka
Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
Vaz, rh Keith
Vaz, Valerie
Walker, Thelma
Watson, Tom
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitfield, Martin
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Williams, Hywel
Williams, Dr Paul
Williamson, Chris
Wilson, Phil
Wishart, Pete
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Woodcock, John
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Jeff Smith and
Nick Smith**

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Amess, Sir David
Andrew, Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atkins, Victoria
Austin, Ian

Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, Conon
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cartlidge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Cooper, Rosie
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Dinage, Caroline
 Docherty, Leo
 Dodds, rh Nigel
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, rh Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias

Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Field, rh Frank
 Field, rh Mark
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freer, Mike
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heappey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard

Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Liddington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, John
 Mann, Scott
 Masterton, Paul
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Paisley, Ian
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark

Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, rh Claire
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Rutley, David
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Spencer, Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomson, Ross
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David

Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Bill
Williamson, rh Gavin
Wilson, rh Sammy

Wood, Mike
Wragg, Mr William
Wright, rh Jeremy
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Wendy Morton and
Craig Whittaker

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time; to stand committed to a Committee of the whole House (Order, this day).

Mr Speaker: Under the Order of the House of today we shall now move to Committee of the whole House.

Sir William Cash: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Yes, I will take the point of order before we go into Committee.

Sir William Cash: I have just been to the Vote Office and, most unfortunately, for some reason that we cannot understand, the copy of the Bill we should be getting actually malfunctioned in some way or another, so, as I understand it, it cannot be obtained from the Vote Office.

Mr Speaker: I am not sure that a Bill is itself capable of malfunction. My imagination, which is quite vivid, is being stretched. It may well be that there has been some malfunction that has caused the absence of the Bill, which the hon. Gentleman wishes to see and of which he would want a copy. That is unfortunate and I hope the matter can be speedily remedied. *[Interruption.]* I have just been advised—I am grateful to the hon. Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin) and the right hon. Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois)—that it was the amendment paper that was not forthcoming. However, I gather that honour is served. The amendment paper is here, the Chairman of Ways and Means is in his place, he has made his selection and the House is going to hear it.

European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 5) Bill

Considered in Committee (Order, this day)

[SIR LINDSAY HOYLE *in the Chair*]

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Lindsay Hoyle):

I must inform the Committee that I have selected the amendments and new clauses as grouped with clauses stand part on the selection paper available in the Vote Office. My provisional grouping and selection of amendments is now available. There will be one group with votes at the end, by 10 pm at the latest, on the lead amendment on which the question has been proposed from the Chair; other amendments to clause 1 selected for separate decision; clause 1 stand part; any amendments to clause 2 selected for separate decision; clause 2 stand part; and any new clauses selected for separate decision.

I am not going to enter into a debate about my reasons for selecting or not selecting amendments and new clauses to this very narrow, single-topic Bill. We start with amendment 13, with which it will be convenient to discuss amendments to clause 1, clause 1 stand part, amendments to clause 2, clause 2 stand part and new clauses.

7.20 pm

Clause 1

DUTIES IN CONNECTION WITH ARTICLE 50 EXTENSION

Amendment proposed: 13, page 1, line 6, leave out “section 2” and insert “section 1”.—(Sir Oliver Letwin.)

This corrects a drafting error in the Bill as published.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): On a point of order, Sir Lindsay. Unfortunately, with the noise of people entering and leaving the Chamber, I did not catch which amendments had been selected, and I wonder whether you could clarify that for the Committee.

The Chairman: They are amendment 13, amendment 20, amendment 21, Government amendment 22, amendment 1, clause 1 stand part, amendment 14, amendment 6, clause 2 stand part, new clause 4, new clause 5, new clause 7 and Government new clause 13. I hope that that helps the Committee. *[Interruption.]* Somebody just won the bingo call.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): On a point of order, Sir Lindsay. For the benefit of the Committee, is the grouping available for Members?

The Chairman: I thought it was available, and it should be available. If not, it is still being done. I think the problem we have got is that with the tight timescale, we are trying to play catch-up a little bit. That is why I am trying to help.

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): On a point of order, Sir Lindsay. Thank you for repeating the list of amendments that have been selected. Could I ask you to repeat them again a little bit more slowly, because we could not get through the amendment paper fast enough?

The Chairman: I am hoping that the lists have arrived.

Sir Oliver Letwin (West Dorset) (Con): On a point of order, Sir Lindsay. Would it not make sense to suspend the sitting for 10 minutes to make sure that all Members present can have a copy of the amendments and the selection list that you have spoken about?

The Chairman: I am just trying to see if we can get an indication of where we are up to with the printing and duplication, and why the lists have not been handed out. Nothing is yet forthcoming. Rather than suspend, I will repeat the list and see whether we can make progress with the numbers. The amendments that have been selected are 13, 20—

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): Bingo!

The Chairman: We have already had that joke, Mr Linden. Repeat jokes do not count. The other items on the selection list are amendment 21, Government amendment 22, amendment 1, clause 1 stand part, amendment 14, amendment 6, clause 2 stand part, new clause 4, new clause 5, new clause 7 and Government new clause 13. For the benefit of the Committee, I will run through it once more: amendment 13, amendment 20, amendment 21, Government amendment 22, amendment 1, clause 1 stand part, amendment 14, amendment 6, clause 2 stand part, new clause 4, new clause 5, new clause 7 and Government new clause 13. Does that help Members?

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): On a point of order, Sir Lindsay. Thank you for clarifying which amendments you have selected. Will you just be absolutely clear on how they have been grouped? Are we debating them all as one large group or in separate groups?

The Chairman: As one single group and, as I said, we will take all the votes at the end. That should help the Committee. Are there any other issues?

Mary Creagh (Wakefield) (Lab): On a point of order, Sir Lindsay. There are no more lists of amendments available from the Vote Office. Can you ask that more are made available urgently so that Members are able to have some?

The Chairman: Yes, we are trying to get the lists as quickly as possible, and we are playing a bit of catch-up. We know where we need to start and we could make a start while the documents are being distributed. We are up against it a bit with time. I want to see who wishes to speak, so I am looking around the Chamber to see who will stand.

Yvette Cooper *rose*—

Sir Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex) (Con): On a point of order, Sir Lindsay. In the spirit of the new regime of bringing the whole House together on these difficult matters, and while you are waiting to get these amendments circulated, I thought it would be helpful if I was to let the House know that the Grand National will be won by a horse called Tiger Roll. [*Laughter.*]

The Chairman: I call Mr Hanson.

David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): On a point of order, Sir Lindsay. To be helpful and while we are awaiting the formal written list, could you advise us at what stage you will take Third Reading before 10 o'clock? It would be interesting to know how long we have to discuss the amendments, which will be forthcoming shortly.

The Chairman: If the Committee takes up all the time, there will be no Third Reading. That is up to the Committee, which is why I want to make progress and get to some of the speeches. I am looking around to see who wishes to speak.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): On a point of order, Sir Lindsay. I think you just called amendment 13. In the selection list, it says “Yvette Cooper”. As it happens, I have here a list of tabled amendments and amendment 13 is in my name.

The Chairman: Just to help the House, on my sheet of paper, which we are working to, amendment 13 is in the name of Yvette Cooper.

With amendment 13 it will be convenient to consider:

Amendment 20, page 1, line 11, at end add

“, and that date shall be no later than 30 June 2019.”

Amendment 21, page 1, line 21, leave out subsections (6) and (7).

Amendment 22, page 2, line 3, at end insert—

“() Nothing in this section prevents a Minister of the Crown from seeking, or agreeing to, an extension of the period specified in Article 50(3) of the Treaty on European Union otherwise than in accordance with this section.”

This amendment ensures that the Bill does not limit the powers that a Minister of the Crown would otherwise have to seek, or agree to, an extension of the Article 50(3) period.

Amendment 1, page 2, line 3, at end insert—

“(8) But the Prime Minister may not agree to any extension of the Article 50 period proposed by the European Council which is later than 22 May 2019.”

Clause stand part.

Amendment 14, in clause 2, page 2, line 5, leave out “2018 Act” and insert

“the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018”.

This clarifies the title of the previous Act being referred to.

Amendment 6, page 2, line 7, leave out from “force” to end of line 7 and insert

“subject to the approval of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly of Wales, on such day as a Minister of the Crown may by regulations appoint.”

Clause 2 stand part.

New clause 4—*Amendability of motions*—

‘Any motion brought forward under section 1(1) in the form set out in section 1(2) may be amended in line with section 1(3) only to include a date.’

This new Clause would prevent further amendments to standing orders etc.

New clause 5—*Amendability of motions (No. 2)*—

‘Any motion brought forward under section 1(1) in the form set out in section 1(2) may be amended in line with section 1(3) only to include a date no later than 22 May 2019.’

This new Clause would prevent further amendments to standing orders or business of the House of Commons etc and impose a maximum duration of the extension period.

New clause 7—*European Elections*—

‘No extension of the period under Article 50(3) of the Treaty on European Union may be agreed by the Prime Minister if as a result the United Kingdom would be required to prepare for or to hold elections to the European Parliament.’

New clause 13—*Procedure for ensuring domestic legislation matches Article 50 extension*—

‘In paragraph 14 of Schedule 7 to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 (regulations amending the definition of “exit day” to be subject to approval by each House of Parliament) for the words from “may” to “each” substitute “is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either”.’

This new clause changes the procedure for regulations, under section 20(4) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, altering the definition of “exit day” from affirmative to negative procedure.

Yvette Cooper: If I may, I will briefly speak to the drafting amendments in my name and that of the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin). I will respond to the other amendments at a later stage in the debate, once other hon. Members have had an opportunity to speak to their amendments.

These are two minor drafting amendments. The first simply corrects something in clause 1, page 1, line 6—instead of referring to “section 2”, it should refer to “section 1”. The second amendment—amendment 14—would ensure that rather than referring to the “2018 Act”, the Bill would properly refer to

“the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018”.

These are simply for clarification.

Michael Tomlinson (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (Con): I looked through the right hon. Lady’s Bill last night and at the drafting of clause 1(2). I had not seen her proposed amendment, but is this not the difficulty of trying to make law on the hoof? We have had only 55 minutes for Second Reading and there is a most obvious drafting error in her original Bill. There was a simple mistake, getting the section wrong, and reading through it I simply did not understand at all which Bill she was referring to. Does this not show the danger, with such an important constitutional change, of trying to make law on the hoof?

Yvette Cooper: Sadly, this is the consequence of us being nine days away from Brexit day. That is not a situation that any of us wanted to be in—to have the clock run down this far—with no agreement in place. The Prime Minister did not put any withdrawal agreement to Parliament until January, and it has been put back several times since then, so we have not had a clear plan. That is the situation we are in.

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): On a point of order, Sir Lindsay. It may help the House. I have just inquired in the Vote Office, and the correct amendment paper, the one that we should be looking at, is the one with 15 printed pages. There has been some confusion, which would explain the point of order from my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash).

The Chairman: That is correct.

7.30 pm

Yvette Cooper: Thank you, Sir Lindsay.

Stephen Doughty: I entirely agree with what my right hon. Friend was saying before the point of order. Have we not all been in Committees dealing with Government legislation when the Government have tabled at every stage, every day, tens or even hundreds of amendments, even before that legislation goes to the other place? Does she agree that the couple of minor things that have been spotted and are being addressed on this occasion are nothing in comparison with what the Government normally do?

Yvette Cooper: I do agree, and I would add that the intent and provisions of this Bill are extremely simple. We understand that, because of the timescale, the Government will ask us to make decisions on some very big things in the next couple of days before the European Council.

Sir William Cash: Not only is the numbering of the amendments wrong, but I am afraid that the amendment to which the right hon. Lady seems to be referring now—her amendment 13—is itself rubbish. It reads:

“leave out ‘section 2’ and insert ‘section 1’”.

Unfortunately, that does not help anyone, for a very simple reason. The Bill refers to section 2. If the amendment is passed, that will be referred to as section 1

“of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2019”.

What is that Act? I thought that the European Union (Withdrawal) Act was passed in 2018.

Yvette Cooper: Yes—

Sir Oliver Letwin: Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Yvette Cooper: I will.

Sir Oliver Letwin: I should have thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) would recognise that that is a reference to the Act that the Bill will become should it pass into law.

Yvette Cooper: The right hon. Gentleman is exactly right. Let me clarify the position. There are two references to two different Acts. There is one reference in clause 1(2) to the 2019 Act that this Bill will become, and another reference in clause 2(1), to the Act passed last year.

Chuka Umunna (Streatham) (Ind): In a way, I rise to speak to all the amendments, which are supposed to relate to the duties to be exercised under the Bill. However, one duty in particular has been omitted from both the Bill and all the selected amendments.

I know that the views that I shall express are supported by the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable), the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas), the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford), the right hon. Member for Dwyfor Meirionnydd (Liz Saville Roberts), and others. We argue that there should be attached to the intention of the Bill the purpose for which it is sought. The European Council has made it absolutely clear that the UK will not necessarily be granted an extension for a general purpose, and that we shall need to specify what we wish to have the extension for. On a number of occasions, senior officials of the various EU institutions have made it clear that they would grant an extension for the purpose of a people’s vote, but no such purpose is referred to in any of the amendments that have been selected, or in the Bill itself.

It is all well and good to argue against no deal—and that, we have been told, lies behind the Bill—but it is clear that if Members wish to be sure of securing the extension to stop no deal, particularly those who will not entertain revocation of article 50, there needs to be a duty not only to request an extension, but to request it for the purpose of what will lead to our being granted the extension that we require, namely a people's vote.

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Ind): Is this not even more serious given that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition are cooking up some plan today that also does not refer to the people's vote?

Chuka Umunna: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. This is so important and we have been brought to this point because our democracy is deadlocked. We are faced with a perfect storm created by a clash of mandates: we are trying to work our way through dealing with a clash of mandates between views expressed by a majority of people who participated in a referendum in 2016 and views expressed in a general election which has led to a hung Parliament and the chaos in this House of Commons.

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Con): The hon. Gentleman is correct in saying that we would have to produce a reason for wanting an extension, but does he agree that the reason that would command wide support here is so that we could clarify the political declaration and develop the ideas of some sort of customs arrangement and some sort of regulatory alignment mapping out our future relationship? Does he agree that most of the European nations would welcome that development, and probably a very long extension to the end of 2021 would be quite readily available?

Chuka Umunna: I do not disagree at all with the Father of the House. I think a long extension would be preferable. I do not think there is anything for us to fear in terms of European elections. After all that is called democracy and at least it means more of our constituents can get involved in this process. In terms of the different elements of this Bill and the duties we are seeking to impose on the Government, it has been said that to find a way forward through all of this requires compromise. As I have said, I believe there should be a duty in this Bill for the Government to seek an extension in order to provide for a people's vote. Why do those of us who argue for a people's vote want a people's vote? We do so because we want to give the British people the ability to take a different course, and in so doing there is compromise. The easy thing to do if we wanted to stop Brexit from happening would be to simply ignore the 2016 result.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Lindsay Hoyle): Order. Obviously the scope of this debate is quite tight and I am going to allow some flexibility in the discussion, but we do not want to concentrate on something that is not even down on the Order Paper tonight. So by all means I will allow some freedom, but we should not open up the debate too far.

Chuka Umunna: I take your point, Sir Lindsay, but all this goes to the duties in the Bill, and there is a glaring omission from the Bill and the selected amendments.

Mr Chris Leslie (Nottingham East) (Ind): My hon. Friend's points are particularly relevant to new clauses 4 and 5 in the name of the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) which seek, I believe artificially, to restrict the nature of amendments that could be placed in relation to any motion on an extension. It is very relevant to new clauses 4 and 5 for us on this side of the House to say "No, there should be greater latitude for the sort of issues to come into that."

The Chairman: Order. I think in fairness that it is my judgment that we will take. Thank you for your advice, but actually it will be the opposite way, not the way the hon. Gentleman is trying to open up. I have said I will allow flexibility, but I am not going to allow discussion on matters that are not part of tonight's debate.

Chuka Umunna: Thank you.

Mr Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I wonder if the hon. Gentleman realises something about his amendment: I would be very happy to see it inserted because I think it would immediately mean a money resolution would be needed, so I give him good encouragement.

Chuka Umunna: I wish my amendment had been selected, but my point is that the purpose for which the extension is sought is not stated as being necessary in the duties of this Bill.

I apologise, Sir Lindsay, if you do not believe I am speaking strictly to the amendments. Part of the challenge raised is the way we are conducting this debate given the fact that we are trying to do justice to the Committee stage of this Bill having only discovered your selection shortly before.

The Chairman: I should say to the hon. Gentleman that, in fairness, I too only got it minutes before, so it is much harder for both of us to try to deal with this.

Chuka Umunna: Absolutely; I was just making an observation.

Ultimately, there is a need for compromise, and we are at that stage in the process where I think that that is what the public expects. Introducing a provision within the duties in the Bill for the Government to seek an extension for the purpose of a people's vote is, I would argue, a compromise, in part because there are ways of carrying out a people's vote that would take account of all the different views in this House. That would involve compromise. For example, we do not like the Prime Minister's withdrawal agreement or the framework for the future relationship, but we would be prepared not to stand in the way of them if they were put to a confirmatory vote.

I shall finish by explaining why I was so keen to crowbar these points into the debate. If we do not address these points, and if, through a backroom deal, we ignore the fact that a people's vote is not provided for in the duties of the Bill, what are we saying to the 1 million people who marched on the streets of this city? What are we saying to the 2 million young people who now have a say on this whole issue but did not have a say three years ago? What are we saying to the 6 million people who signed a parliamentary petition arguing for a revocation, in frustration that a people's vote might

[Chuka Umunna]

not happen? And what are we saying to the majority of people in this country who certainly did not vote for this mess? That is why it is important, if we are going to seek an extension, that we make it clear that we want to do so primarily to give those people a voice so that they get a final say on whether we go ahead with this disaster or whether we seek to change our country in a different fashion.

George Eustice (Camborne and Redruth) (Con): I thank the House of Commons Clerks for the immense amount of work they have put in to ensure that we have these amendments in order and ready to be debated. This is clearly a rather unprecedented type of Bill to bring before Parliament. In common with my right hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Richard Benyon), I have been somewhat supportive of the attempts by my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) to create space on the House's agenda to discuss indicative votes. Indeed, I have tabled amendments of my own during the debates on those votes, and I abstained on a business of the House motion to enable those votes to take place. I did not do that today, however, because like my right hon. Friend the Member for Newbury, I believe that this is a very different reason for taking control of the House.

I rise to speak to my two amendments: amendments 20 and 21. Amendment 20 seeks to add to subsection (3) of clause 1 a maximum date of 30 June 2019 to that elected by the Government. Amendment 21 would delete altogether subsections (6) and (7) of clause 1, which make provision for how the House would deal with a situation in which the European Union had rejected an approach by the Government to seek an extension and had instead made a counter-offer. My reason for tabling both those amendments is that, as a number of hon. Members have pointed out, this legislation is indeed rushed. We all have our views on the reason for that, and we are indeed at the eleventh hour of the process of leaving the European Union. That means that this is an unusual Bill, in that it seeks to bind the hands of the Government on a decision that would normally be a matter of prerogative power and a matter for the Executive to take to negotiations in international forums. Both amendments recognise the fact that the Bill has now had its Second Reading and is therefore in play, but they nevertheless seek to place a restriction on its scope and power.

While any date can be placed in a motion under clause 1(2), amendment 20 seeks a maximum of 30 June 2019, making it impossible for the Government, or someone else by amendment, to set a date beyond that. That is an important principle given the rushed nature of this legislation. It would enable both this House or the Government to seek a short extension, as the Prime Minister has already indicated she would, but it would prevent this House or the Government from electing for a long extension, which might effectively lead to the revocation of article 50.

7.45 pm

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): I want to pick up on a comment the hon. Gentleman made a moment ago. As I understand it, amendment 21 would delete subsections (6) and (7) and amendment 20 seeks a

maximum extension length of 30 June 2019, but subsection (5) would remain. On my reading of the Bill, that would allow the House to amend the 30 June date that he seeks to insist is the latest date that the Prime Minister could put in any motion provided for under subsection (2). Will he just clarify whether that would be the result of his amendments?

George Eustice: Well, we have all had a little time to look at the Bill, but my understanding is that amendment 20 would insert a maximum time limit and that subsection (5) would then be subject to it. Subsection (3) makes explicit reference to subsection (2), which relates to the motion that would be before the House. I think the consequence of amendment 20 would be to include a limit of the 30 June, notwithstanding what the right hon. Gentleman says about subsection (5).

Hilary Benn: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way again. That would not be my interpretation, because subsection (5) states:

"If the motion in the form set out in subsection (2) for the purposes of subsection(1) is agreed to with an amendment",

meaning an amendment to the date that the Prime Minister has asked for, which clearly shows that the motion that the Prime Minister would move is amendable. Therefore, if the House decided to include a date different from 30 June 2019, that is what the Prime Minister would have to seek in her discussions with the European Union.

George Eustice: I do not agree, because subsection (3), as amended by amendment 20, would mean that it would not be possible to have a date in a motion under subsection (2) that went beyond 30 June, because subsection (3) would make it explicit that the date could be no later.

Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): Without wishing to cause a row with my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), I agree with the interpretation of the hon. Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice). It has always been the case in this place that a motion cannot trump legislation, so the Bill would have primacy if the motion included a date that was later than that on the face of the Bill. While I understand my right hon. Friend's misinterpretation, I would interpret the Bill in the same way as the hon. Gentleman.

George Eustice: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. Subsection (3) would have to not exist for the point of the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) to be valid. Amendment 20 would amend subsection (3) and therefore change the terms under which subsection (2) could be exercised, which would in turn have a direct impact on the reading of subsection (5).

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): I want to test amendment 20 slightly, because it is not dissimilar to an amendment that has been selected in my name. How did my hon. Friend pick 30 June 2019? How does that offer clarity on what he wants to achieve?

George Eustice: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I think I chose that date primarily because the Prime Minister initially suggested that she may seek a short extension until, say, June. We all recognise the

issues with the European elections and that if we were to go for a long extension, we would have to consider whether to fight those elections and start fielding candidates. My own view is that, by selecting 30 June as a maximum, the amendment would not preclude the Government from choosing a date of, say, 22 May, but if, for instance, it were thought necessary to go slightly longer, to go to 30 June, it would be open to all parties, both the UK Government and the European Union, to have a conversation about whether it is indeed necessary to hold European elections in this country, given it would be only a short extension for another month.

I am aware that the British civil service has considered whether, in a short-term, interim arrangement, it might be possible to send delegates from this House to represent the UK in the European Parliament.

Mike Gapes: Is it not a fact that the European Union has made it absolutely clear that the maximum extension available—an extension has to be agreed, unlike a revocation—is to 22 May, unless there is a long extension of potentially 21 months or more? In those circumstances, we would have to fight the European elections. If the hon. Gentleman's proposal were agreed, it is unlikely to be accepted by the European Union, which could lead to us crashing out with no deal.

George Eustice: I simply say to the hon. Gentleman that amendment 20 is generous to the Government and would give them the option, should they believe it necessary under EU law, to set a date of 22 May under subsection (2), but if it were felt necessary by all parties, including the European Union, that—in order to get a withdrawal agreement over the line—an extra month would be needed beyond May, it is not beyond the wit of man to do so and to put arrangements in place so it would not be necessary for us to hold European elections in this country.

I would further contend that one of the biggest problems we have had throughout this negotiation is a tendency to get over-obsessed with the intricacies of so-called European law. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs recently told me of a meeting he had had with Ministers from other European countries, at which they made the point that, if the politics require it, it is always possible to amend or disapply European law for the short term, should it be necessary and expedient for all parties, to get a sensible resolution to a difficult crisis.

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Ind): With respect, I think the hon. Gentleman will find that in treaty, in international law, EU citizens are entitled to vote in European elections and to be represented in the European Parliament. Although I agree that, often, where there's a will there's a way, especially with the European Union, my understanding is that a change to an international treaty would be required to extend the date to 30 June without holding those elections. That is why the EU is very keen that, if the date is extended, the extension should be much longer.

George Eustice: I understand the right hon. Lady's point. I simply say that Sweden, unlike Denmark and the UK, never had an opt-out from joining the euro, but it held a referendum that decided it should not join the euro. As a result, technically speaking, Sweden has been in breach of international law and European law ever since.

It is simply the case that if it were felt necessary to find a way of extending our membership to get the withdrawal agreement through—for a period of one month under amendment 20—I cannot believe it is beyond the wit of man for that to be accommodated, notwithstanding what might be said in some treaty or other. It would not be the first time that the European Union has done this.

As I pointed out earlier, if the Government believe that the treaties are, indeed, inviolable and cannot be changed, even for a period of four weeks, it would be open to them to select a date of 22 May. My amendment is generous in giving them the option, should it be possible to get agreement with the European Union and other parties, to go for a slightly later date.

Craig Mackinlay (South Thanet) (Con): Let me assist my hon. Friend. This question of the date has been a vexed one. Obviously, we are not in favour of any extension, but the Commission tends to think that 22 May is a key date. I had a meeting with Guy Verhofstadt in Brussels and he tends to recognise the 30th as a cut-off date, so I think we are into a period of ambiguity and my hon. Friend is right to give this sort of latitude.

George Eustice: I thank my hon. Friend for all that. One problem with this whole negotiation is getting hung up over some clause or other in some EU treaty when we all—we or the EU—face a much bigger dilemma: how do we settle this political crisis? We have to consider how we find a resolution to this dispute, and achieve a reconciliation in our country and an outcome to this debate that can settle the Brexit argument and deliver the referendum result from 2016.

David Hanson: Does the Bill, as drafted, not give the Prime Minister—I am surprised at myself for saying this—the flexibility to discuss with Opposition parties and come to a conclusion as to the best date, in the interests of achieving the very objectives the hon. Gentleman has set?

George Eustice: Yes, but it does so through a Bill and it gives the Prime Minister the opportunity to make her case to Parliament, but without any constraint on that at all. Given that this is a very novel legal approach—a rushed piece of legislation, with a Bill being driven through the House in one day—we should be cautious about the scope we attach to that Bill. Attaching an ability to go for a very long extension of several years—potentially five years if Parliament decided that is what it wanted—is worthy of further deliberation.

Seema Malhotra: I understand the hon. Gentleman's perspective on the politics of this and the policy outcome, which would be a limit of 30 June in terms of what this Bill could achieve. I want to clarify something with him, because my interpretation of his amendment is more in line with that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn). Amendment 20 would put a date of

“no later than 30 June 2019”

in clause 1(3). It seems to me that that is superseded by subsection (5), and if the hon. Gentleman wanted to achieve his intended outcome he should have tabled a further

[Seema Malhotra]

amendment, proposing another date in subsection (5). He has not done that, so it would override and be able to amend a date in a motion tabled under subsection (2).

George Eustice: I strongly disagree with the hon. Lady's reading, as subsection (3) sets out the terms in which anything can be offered under subsection (2) and amendment 20 places a clear limit in subsection (3) of 30 June. Subsection (5) then says:

"If the motion in the form set out in subsection (2) for the purposes of subsection (1) is agreed to with an amendment to change the date"

and so on. The issue I have is that subsection (3) says that the date has a time limit, so it would not be legally possibly under subsection (2) to have a date that contradicted the requirements set out in subsection (3). That is my contention and I disagree with the hon. Lady. If she and the right hon. Member for Leeds Central were right, they would not have had subsection (3) at all.

Sir William Cash: My hon. Friend made a remark that goes to the issue of the money resolution that I raised earlier. He said, and I am going to take his word for it, because no doubt as a recent former Minister he has followed this carefully, that the extension in question could be as long as five years. Let us think about that. If we multiply five by £18 billion of taxpayers' money, which is the amount we pay every year in gross contributions to the EU, we find that it works out at £90 billion. That is his assessment, and I am simply asking him to ask the Minister vicariously whether he is aware that this Bill could cost £90 billion of taxpayers' money? I think—I hope—the media will pick up on that.

8 pm

George Eustice: My hon. Friend makes an important point. It is why, given the rushed nature of the Bill—we all understand the reasons for that—it is necessary to place constraints on the scope of its operation, to limit precisely the kind of financial liabilities to which he alludes.

My contention is that any suggestion of a longer extension beyond 30 June, perhaps to 21 months, two years or even longer, should surely be the subject of another Bill. After all, we have demonstrated today that we can introduce Bills of this sort in short order. If the future of this House is to be that any decisions of this sort require a Bill, and that one can be delivered with a day's debate on the Floor of the House, surely it is right to constrain and restrict the scope of this Bill to delivering us through this immediate crisis—without doubt, this is a crisis—but nevertheless to keep open the option for the House to consider a longer extension if it wished to do so.

Seema Malhotra: The hon. Gentleman is being generous in accepting interventions. I fear that the interpretation of his amendment is not what he intends. This is not about the rights or wrongs of the date, but what his amendment seems to do, which is to put a cap and an end date on what the Prime Minister may put to the House, but not on an amendment to her motion that the House could seek. That is the difference between subsections (3) and (5).

George Eustice: Nothing in this Bill prevents the Prime Minister from still exercising royal prerogative powers outside the Bill. Were the Government to recommend to the House a decision to go for a longer extension, and they had a clear rationale for doing so, I still think that they would be able to do so outside the scope of the Bill. What the Bill does not do is say that the prerogative powers of the Executive are vanquished in all areas for all time. Instead, it seeks to establish an ability for the House, on this particular narrow issue, to table a motion. Nothing in the Bill constrains the Government's ability still to exercise prerogative powers; it clearly requires them to exercise those prerogative powers in accordance with the Bill, if they are indeed exercised in response to motions passed by this House, so I do not accept the hon. Lady's point.

Michael Tomlinson: I have been wondering about that. My hon. Friend says that the motion in effect will mandate, but does he agree with my reading, which is that under subsection (2) the House simply agrees that the Prime Minister is seeking an extension? It does not mandate or order it. Does that not again make nonsense of swift drafting on such an important issue?

George Eustice: There will always be issues when legislation of this sort is drafted. This is unorthodox legislation, an unusual type of Bill, and that is why the two amendments I tabled seek to place some restrictions on the scope in which the powers may be exercised.

Amendment 21 would simply delete subsections (6) and (7) altogether.

Sir William Cash: On a point of order, Dame Rosie. Given the complete rubbish that the Bill contains, is it possible for us to find out who drafted it? Was it drafted by parliamentary counsel or by some ad hoc person? That is quite important.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Rosie Winterton): Am I to understand that that was a point of order?

Sir William Cash: I am looking for an answer to my question. After all, the House authorities are responsible for bringing forward Bills. We have had nothing but trouble—on the amendments and on other things—since these proceedings began. I am not criticising; I know that things were done at tremendous speed, which is why the Bill is so inappropriate. The question really is what we are trying to legislate for; that is what these Committee proceedings allow us to ask. I am beginning to observe that this Bill is complete rubbish. It is therefore important for us to know who drafted it.

The Second Deputy Chairman: I think the hon. Gentleman is expressing a debatable opinion about the Bill. The Public Bill Office is always available to advise Members on the drafting of the Bill. I think we will leave it there.

George Eustice: I put on record my enormous respect for my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset. I appreciate that through all the measures that he has tabled, he is trying to deal with the incredibly difficult and complex situation that the country faces. From the time I was first involved with the party, I have worked with him closely. He has been the anchor-man for

several leaderships in the Conservative party. Whatever differences Members may have on this issue, he deserves the respect of all Conservative Members.

Amendment 21 would delete subsections (6) and (7) of clause 1, which provide for the House to consider a counter-offer from the European Union. If the Prime Minister were to seek an extension until 30 June 2019 and the European Union made a counter-offer, the question would arise of what should happen next. My contention is that at that point, the Government should bring their own proposals to the House. If the House then felt that it wanted to bind the Government's hands on what should happen next, that would surely be a matter for a future Bill, given that we have today demonstrated our ability to pass legislation in a speedy and efficient fashion.

Sir Oliver Letwin: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's kind remarks, but I wonder whether he means to remove subsections (6) and (7). If we did not pass the Bill and the Prime Minister went to the European Council, as my hon. Friend envisages, with a request for something less than 30 June, and it said, which I think would not suit him, and might well not suit me, that there should be a 21-month extension, there would be nothing to prevent the Prime Minister accepting that, using the prerogative power. It would of course be necessary, as things stand, for the House to agree a statutory instrument changing the exit date in the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 to reconcile UK law with the position in international law, but the House would not have much choice about that, because we would be out of kilter with international law if we did not make the change, as we discovered when the original SI was made.

Of course, when the Prime Minister made the original application, she did not seek the approval of the House; she was able to make it, perfectly properly, under the prerogative power. If my hon. Friend removes subsections (6) and (7), the effect is not, as he might imagine, to stop the Prime Minister doing something that he would regard as a mischief—namely accepting then and there a very long extension—but to continue to enable her to do that.

George Eustice: I am sure that my right hon. Friend is aware of the reason that I resigned from the Government, which is that I genuinely believe it is right that the Executive should, as a general rule, retain control of these types of decisions. If we got into a position where 650 or so MPs here were trying to participate in a negotiation with the European Union, I would say we were in quite a bit of trouble.

This is a question of the balance of risk. My view is that, confronted with an unpalatable decision—a demand for, say, a two-year extension from the European Union as the only deal on offer—I would still rather take my chances with the Cabinet to show some backbone than take the risk with this House, and I say that having resigned from the Government. That is as simple and as honest as I can be.

Sir Oliver Letwin: In that case, I withdraw what I was saying in the sense that my hon. Friend would be achieving exactly what he wants; he would be leaving the Prime Minister with untrammelled prerogative power, and of course that is a perfectly possible choice to make.

George Eustice: It is very good that my right hon. Friend and I agree on something. If we are not careful, I fear that what will actually happen is that the European Union will make appalling demands for financial contributions and a long extension, and, when it came down to it, this House would not have the courage to resist, having already indicated that it lacks the courage to leave without a deal, which I believe was a mistake. I did not want to leave with no deal—I would like there to be an orderly withdrawal with an agreement—but I believe that taking no deal off the table would fundamentally undermine our position.

Michael Tomlinson: Following on from the intervention by my constituency neighbour, my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin), is it not the case that in any event, notwithstanding whatever is in the Bill, the Prime Minister would still retain the prerogative power? The Bill may seek that the Prime Minister asks for a certain date, but in fact there is nothing preventing her from adopting a parallel track or making a third request. Even if this Bill is passed unamended, which my right hon. Friend clearly does not want to happen, the Prime Minister could still chart her own course.

George Eustice: My hon. Friend makes a good point, but the way in which this Bill is crafted—linking back to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act, as it does in clause 1(2)—means that it does have legal force. Therefore, it does bind the House and constrain the ability of the Government to exercise those prerogative powers. That is why the two amendments that I have tabled would accept that the Bill has passed Second Reading—and, therefore, that this House has voted to constrain those prerogative powers—but would nevertheless place constraints on the scope within which the House can exercise those powers. My hon. Friend is absolutely right that, were amendments 20 and 21 agreed to, it would still be open to the Government to use their prerogative powers to make agreements beyond that scope.

Sir Oliver Letwin: I apologise for continuing a triangular discussion through my hon. Friend, but in response to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Dorset and North Poole (Michael Tomlinson), I think that the answer is actually no. The prerogative power is subject to statutory limitation. This Bill would limit statutorily the prerogative power in that respect. We can know that for sure because that is the view of the Government lawyers. Government amendment 22 seeks to reintroduce the prerogative power because the Government recognise—this is the discussion that I have been having with the Government during the course of the day—that the Bill currently limits the prerogative power.

There is a choice for the House. We may obviously take different views about how to make that choice, but just as a matter of plain fact, there is a choice to be made. One option is the position advocated by my hon. Friend the Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice), which is one of reinstating the full prerogative power. That could otherwise be achieved by Government amendment 22, so there are two ways to do that. The other option, which I would prefer, is to limit that prerogative power by statute so that the House has the ability to constrain, to some degree, what the Prime Minister accepts by way of an extension from the EU.

George Eustice: I think my right hon. Friend's comments were directed at my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Dorset and North Poole (Michael Tomlinson), rather than directly at me, so I will not become engaged in this discussion.

Regarding the provisions for subsections (6) and (7), the question still remains of what would happen if there were a counter-offer from the European Union. My contention is that that should then be a matter for the Government to bring before the House in a statement, to be challenged in the usual way. If at that point the House was unsatisfied with the Government's proposal, it would still be open to it, through an initiative of the sort we have seen today, to introduce a Bill placing a further constraint on the Government, perhaps by requiring them to accept a counter-offer, for instance of a two-year extension, so that we could have a fuller, longer and perhaps more considered debate on what in my view would be a really big decision, because we would have gone five years since the first referendum and achieved nothing. The risk of not leaving the European Union at all and ending up arguing about a second referendum would grow. I believe that opting for such a lengthy extension would be a very big decision, and one that would warrant a separate Bill with a separate, much longer and much more detailed discussion.

8.15 pm

David Hanson: I hope that the Committee will bear with me, because the amendments were tabled only very recently. However, I think that they deserve exploration. I support the drafting amendments tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin). Having served on nearly 50 Public Bill Committees during my time in the House, I know that Governments bring forward amendments to correct drafting errors during the course of proceedings, and there will be an opportunity for further such amendments when the Bill is considered in the Lords. What my right hon. Friend and the right hon. Gentleman are seeking to do, in principle, is to rule out a no-deal scenario, and that is vital for the House.

The Bill, as currently drafted—in clause 1(2)—leaves open the date for leaving until the Prime Minister brings back a measure. The amendments that I wish to speak against tonight are those indicating that there should be definitive dates for the closure of that discussion by the Prime Minister. As I said when I intervened on the hon. Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice), I find myself in a strange position tonight, in the sense that I want to give the Prime Minister maximum flexibility to join together the House and the British people by achieving a deal that satisfies the British people, the Government and Opposition Members. My constituency voted to leave and I voted to remain. There is a settlement to be made, and the Prime Minister needs maximum flexibility to achieve that settlement. What the House has been very clear about is that no deal should not be an option, and that is what the Bill seeks to rule out.

The amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Camborne and Redruth would set a date of 30 June, and the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for St Albans (Mrs Main) would set a date of 22 May. Amendment 6, tabled by the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash), seeks the agreement of the Northern

Ireland Assembly prior to any settlement being agreed, despite the fact that currently, for reasons I find disappointing, the Northern Ireland Assembly does not meet. There is no definitive date in the hon. Gentleman's proposal. All those amendments would restrict the Prime Minister's opportunity to make a difference and achieve a deal in this House.

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): My right hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. Is it not also true that the Prime Minister has invited the Leader of the Opposition to discuss the political declaration and the withdrawal agreement? The amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) would effectively curtail those discussions. Should we not pass the Bill cleanly in order to maximise the opportunities for that process?

David Hanson: I accept fully what my hon. Friend says. The Leader of the Opposition has this very afternoon met the Prime Minister in Downing Street, at her request, along with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer), to set out positions on a customs union and a single market, and potentially even a confirmatory vote, for the Prime Minister to consider. The Bill does not fix a particular date, which provides the flexibility needed to give time for that process. The amendments, which I have only had a cursory look at, fix dates of 30 June and 22 May.

I recognise that there is a problem: the European elections are the elephant in the room. When I was the Minister of State for Northern Ireland, we regularly passed legislation to establish or not establish elections in the Northern Ireland Assembly within a day or two days. The Prime Minister is going to the European Council on 10 April to discuss what the House has decided. The House may well decide that this Bill should have an open date, or we can fetter that discussion by putting a date in place. I want to give the Prime Minister the maximum flexibility.

Mrs Main: I will be speaking to my amendment, but I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman desires flexibility to deny Brexit altogether, given that he represents a leave constituency. The point of my amendment, which I hope he will look at a little more closely, is to stop the Prime Minister agreeing anything that may be unacceptable to the House. The date I have picked is the one currently being discussed by the European Union. Therefore, should the Prime Minister agree a date that the House finds unacceptable, she would have to come back to the House to suggest it, rather than being able to do what she can at the moment, which is to pick a date that this House may find unacceptable. That is the point of my amendment.

David Hanson: That is an interesting point. The amendments are fresh, but the key thing for me is that the House has shown in the last three months—certainly in the last two to three weeks—that it will not accept unilaterally what the Prime Minister wants to bring back to the House, and this House has many ways in which it can check the Executive's decisions.

The simple point I make is that, in my constituency in north Wales, the manufacturing businesses that make cars have said that no deal would cost them £10 million per day; the farmers who produce lamb would not be able to export in a no-deal scenario; and Airbus, which

makes the best planes in the world, would have difficulty exporting in a no-deal scenario. The Cabinet Office has said that prices would rise—it is not me saying that, it is the Government's own estimation.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford mentioned the European arrest warrant and the SIS II agreement on sharing information. We do not know whether those would exist in their current form in a no-deal scenario. In the Select Committee on Justice, on which I sit, neither the Secretary of State for Justice this morning nor the Solicitor General yesterday could give assurances about the future relationship on important matters of security and justice in a no-deal scenario.

James Cleverly (Braintree) (Con): The right hon. Gentleman makes a compelling case on people's concerns about what may happen in a Brexit without a withdrawal agreement, but the European Union has explained to us on many occasions that the withdrawal agreement is now basically a hermetically sealed box, and many of the things he discusses in relation to the future relationship, such as trading, are encompassed in the political declaration, which cannot be binding—we have been told that many times. I genuinely fail to understand why, if he is so concerned about our leaving without an agreement, he does not just vote for the withdrawal agreement and then set about making his case for what should be in the political declaration, which cannot be binding until we have formally left the European Union.

David Hanson: With due respect to the hon. Gentleman, we have had that argument over the last three or four weeks, and the House of Commons has spoken. That is why his party leader has invited my party leader to discuss the next steps. I will wait to hear what the Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, the hon. Member for Worcester (Mr Walker), says about the Government's amendments, because we need to be clear about those. However, the fettering of the process by the dates stated in the amendments would cause great difficulty for the objective of my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford, which is to ensure that next week, whatever happens with our discussions, we have a date determined by the Prime Minister for when we will leave with a deal, rather than crash out without a deal in the future.

Mrs Main: The right hon. Gentleman has been saying that he would like to have certainty—I completely accept the worries about a possible no deal and not knowing what is going on, which is crucial for businesses—but, in relation to the amendments restricting exactly how long the Prime Minister can agree to on her own, how will he feel if the Prime Minister comes back and says, “I have accepted, because I am able to, a two-year extension”, and all the uncertainty for his constituents about what will happen is magnified for two years?

David Hanson: Let me say to the hon. Lady that we have to have some trust in this process now. This House has to compromise and have some trust. The Prime Minister has made a genuine offer to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition—much to my surprise—to get herself and indeed, with due respect to the hon. Lady, the Conservative party out of a giant

hole. Let us leave the Prime Minister unfettered in determining the date, because that is the important matter in discussing our objectives today.

Ben Lake (Ceredigion) (PC): On the points the right hon. Gentleman has made about amendment 6, does he not agree with me that, as opposed to representing a sincere interest in and respect for the devolved Administrations, it is a very clever way of preventing the quick and effective enactment of this Bill?

David Hanson: The hon. Gentleman will know that I want the Welsh Assembly and the Welsh Government—and the Scottish Parliament—to be consulted, to have a say and, I hope, to join in with the settlement, in whatever form it takes that can make the situation for my constituents and the country as a whole much calmer and better. He will know, and the hon. Member for North Down (Lady Hermon) will know—I am pleased to see her in her place—that the amendment would be a block in the event of the Northern Ireland Assembly not being restored. It is not even a block simply in relation to the Northern Ireland Government; it is a block even if direct rule is restored, for example, because the amendment refers to the Northern Ireland Assembly. We have no definitive date for that restoration, and while I would want it to happen tomorrow—it has been 12 years since I was the last direct rule Minister in Northern Ireland, and I would like to see the Assembly restored—ultimately, that is not going to happen.

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind): The right hon. Gentleman has made the point that the Northern Ireland Assembly has not been sitting. It has not been sitting since January 2017, and there is no expectation that the Assembly will be sitting any day soon. Further to that point, the right hon. Gentleman, as a former direct rule Minister in Northern Ireland, will know that it would be an unmitigated disaster for Northern Ireland if this country were to leave without a deal. It would be an unmitigated disaster in terms of security—he will know all about the threat from dissident republicans, and he will also know that Sinn Féin would use a no-deal Brexit to campaign for a border poll to take Northern Ireland out of the United Kingdom and into a united Ireland.

David Hanson: The hon. Lady speaks much more sense about this matter than I could possibly do, because she is up to date on the situation, but that is clear to me. Let me take the example mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford—the European arrest warrant. We use the arrest warrant on numerous occasions to bring people who have committed crimes in the Republic into Northern Ireland and vice versa. If that is not in place, and in a no-deal scenario it would not be in place, the situation would be poorer, and we have no clarity on that whatsoever. The security of Northern Ireland would be in a worse place than it is now, and I am not prepared to vote for that.

Sir William Cash: The right hon. Gentleman has referred to the arrest warrant, and I have to say to him that I am well aware of a case in the county of Staffordshire. A person under an arrest warrant was convicted in his absence of murder, but it in fact transpired that he was

[*Sir William Cash*]

working in Staffordshire, and he was then found not guilty because he was actually working in a restaurant in England at the time when he was supposed to have committed the murder in Italy.

David Hanson: Well, the hon. Gentleman cannot get away with that, because people are found innocent or guilty on different occasions, but, ultimately, if someone has done something, they are convicted. At the moment, if an arrest warrant goes out to a country in the European Union, an individual will speedily be brought back to face justice and a trial, and may face conviction and imprisonment. Any change in the arrest warrant procedure will ensure that the procedure is slower, more cumbersome and clunkier.

If the hon. Gentleman wants to see that, he should listen to what the Deputy Chief Constable of Northern Ireland said only this weekend. He said that not having the arrest warrant would be clunkier, more difficult, more bureaucratic and slower, and would lead to a worse position. With due respect to the hon. Gentleman, I will take no lessons on the arrest warrant, which is about protecting my constituents and all citizens in this country, and ensuring that criminals are brought to justice. If we have a no-deal scenario, which this Bill is trying to stop, that will become more difficult.

I have said my piece; I hope that Government Members will reflect on the position. This Bill is about protecting us against no deal and ensuring a positive future on the range of issues involved—agriculture, business, transport, crime and security. Any fettering of the Prime Minister's discretion on that will make it more difficult to achieve the consensus that I understand she is trying to achieve with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, to ensure that we achieve a better settlement in this House than we have managed in the last few weeks and months.

8.30 pm

Mrs Main: I would like to speak to amendment 1, standing in my name, which addresses similar themes to the proposal of my hon. Friend the Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice), who spoke earlier.

I was quite horrified when I read this brief Bill, because it mandates the Prime Minister to seek an extension, but there is no date associated with that extension, as other Members have mentioned. On top of that, as we know, article 50 enshrined the date on which we would be leaving: 29 March. The Prime Minister, as was quite within her rights—my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) said it was her untrammelled prerogative—decided, when she went into her negotiations, that she would accept a new date, which was offered to her by the European Union, having been agreed in a room, in a debate in which she did not participate. She accepted a date that was not of her choosing.

My concern is that, whatever date this House considers to give the right amount of time, if the Prime Minister is not fettered, as the right hon. Member for Delyn (David Hanson) mentioned, she is quite within her rights—nobody here is seeking in any way, shape or form to curtail those rights—to accept another date

that is offered to her and which might be the only date on offer. Whatever date this House might choose, for whatever associated reasons or purposes, the Prime Minister is quite within her rights to accept—or reject—the date on offer from the European Union.

I find that incredibly worrying. Depending on which side of the argument hon. Members find themselves, they could have the Prime Minister seeking a date in line with the House's instructions, but not having to agree the date, even if the EU says that she can have it. That would be a rather bizarre scenario, but the Bill would not stop it, so whatever date the House fixed on could, in theory, only be asked for, but then be rejected.

The other side, which worries me far more, is that the Prime Minister could go along with a date—as yet unspecified by this House and with no associated justification—and be offered a date, let us say, two years in the future. I would suggest that at that point most hon. Members would have severe concerns about the legitimacy of whatever was being agreed by the Prime Minister—or any of us in this House—with the date set so far in the future.

Amendment 1, which stands in my name and that of 21 other hon. Members, simply proposes a date that has already been accepted by the European Union—I know that Guy Verhofstadt has talked about the end of June, but the European Union has suggested this date on many occasions—as a date that it would be comfortable extending to. It is also a date that would not oblige us, by default, to fight in the European elections. It would mean that the Prime Minister could accept the date offered to her—to the 22nd—but could not arbitrarily accept any other date offered without bringing it back and discussing with the House whether it met what the House wishes to achieve.

The right hon. Member for Delyn talked about not tying the Prime Minister's hands, but if the House truly wishes to shape the next phase—I really do not like this process, but I am trying to look at it constructively—it is incredibly important that she does not have *carte blanche* to sit in a room in Brussels, meekly accept a date that is fixed, and then come back to the House, which will not be able to alter that date. I picked the 22 May date, because she can agree anything up until that point. After that date, with which we are all familiar, we will not have the Prime Minister accepting a date that may end up coming to this House and not finding favour. We are then back in the long grass. We are back to arguing about the date. We are back to arguing *ad infinitum*, to the great uncertainty for the many businesses who feel that what is going on here today is beyond a farce.

Other Members who have a better legal brain than mine—I have no such qualifications whatever—are looking at the Bill line by line and saying it is shoddily and poorly drafted, and that it does not stand up to scrutiny. The argument that comes back—I have heard it a few times this afternoon—is that, “Well, we haven't had a lot of time and this is to stop no deal.” My amendment does not do anything to harm the Bill's objectives. It gives the Bill belt and braces to ensure that the Prime Minister, to whom everyone says, “Let's give her some latitude and trust”, is not able to accept something that is certainly beyond the wishes and scope of this House or the people who voted to leave the European Union.

I hope my amendment is given serious consideration, since we are now supposed to be engaging constructively with the process in a cross-party consensual way to try to get something through. I would be far more comfortable if the Prime Minister was not allowed free rein, or untrammelled prerogative, as my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset said. As the House may have observed, we have already tried that and it has not got us terribly far. I therefore ask Members please to consider this amendment. It is very small. It does not stop anything. It simply might stop what some Members have maybe not thought through too well, which is the date.

Michael Tomlinson: I applaud my hon. Friend's ingenuity. I am minded to support her amendment this evening and I hope she presses it to a Division. May I ask her about another extension? Clause 1(2), as drafted, does not mandate or order the Prime Minister to do anything—that comes later on in the Bill—but no timeframe is given either. My hon. Friend mentions a timeframe up to 22 May, but, as drafted, the Bill effectively gives no specified time period within which the Prime Minister needs to seek any extension in any event.

Mrs Main: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Clerks were very helpful when I was trying to draft my amendment. I said, "Surely we can't have this open-ended situation?" Very helpfully, the Clerks said to me that the Bill can say what it likes, but at the moment the Prime Minister, in the untrammelled way that my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset said, can do what she likes. That is the situation. We are in fact sending off a Prime Minister who will be reluctant to deliver this proposal.

The Bill is supposed to be incredibly flawed, but what I do not want it to be, as we discovered from the Gina Miller challenge, is a nightmare going through the courts. Our businesses deserve better than to have a piece of cobbled together legislation that is rammed through—I gather it will be rammed through the other place, too—just to make sure we avoid no deal. Have hon. Members not done any adding up recently? This House is the tail that is now wagging the dog. There is no pretence on the Government Benches that this is going to be an easy ride—not for this stage, the next stage or any other stages coming down the road. There might be fears from Opposition Members, but they seem to be able to exercise an awful lot more muscle on the political agreement than we can on the Government side of the House; they in effect have the whip hand over the Government. The true nature of the House is that it does not really desire to leave. The House will have masses of opportunities over the coming months to ensure that the political agreement is shaped in a fashion that they would like. That is the one thing about which the European Union has said, "We can open that, no trouble." What the EU will not open is the withdrawal agreement, and a withdrawal agreement will be required to achieve many of the things that the House wants to achieve. That is why I reluctantly agreed to support the withdrawal agreement when it was separated from the political arrangements.

The Bill that we are considering is poor, and badly drafted. I accept the reasons why, and I accept that we are all scrabbling around to try to improve it, but I am disappointed that the Lords may not have much time to

consider any amendments that are made tonight. I hope that the other end of the building does not function like a rubber-stamp machine and say, "It doesn't matter; this Bill is going through regardless."

The Bill will come back to haunt the House. If the procedure that we have followed today ends up creating a lawyers' charter and a nightmare in the courts, it will do huge damage to our industries. Believe me, for every Gina Miller out there launching challenges to make sure that a public vote is listened to in a proper legal fashion, there will be lawyers picking over the Bill and saying that it does not stand up, so can we please ensure that sensible amendments are made tonight?

I would like to think that my amendment is sensible because, as the hon. Member for Streatham (Chuka Umunna) has pointed out, the only date that the European Union will accept is 22 May. I believe that if we put that date in the Bill, we would be picking a date that the European Union was comfortable with. The House would have the security of knowing that the Prime Minister could not unilaterally accept any other date that the EU came up with, but would have to bring it back for Members' consideration. If the House chooses to adopt it, fine, and if the House says, "Go back and try harder", fine, but there will be certainty. I hope that Members on both sides of the argument will support this amendment, because it would give them the certainty of knowing there will be no jiggery-pokery and no clever shifting of dates or times. My amendment would oblige the Prime Minister to come back to the House with any new date, and she would not be allowed to accept a date that did not reflect the will of the House. Surely, that is what the House wishes to achieve.

Tom Brake: I thank the hon. Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice), who is not in his place, for tabling amendment 20, because it gives me the opportunity to speak against it. In the amendment, he attempts to set 30 June as a date beyond which the Government cannot seek an extension. As the hon. Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes) said in an intervention, it is clear that if the UK wants to secure an extension beyond that date, it will have to embark on a general election or a people's vote, or go to the EU with a concrete, credible proposal that would enable the EU to give us a longer extension.

Frankly, I do not think the Government can do anything that will enable them to hit the date of 22 May, or even 30 June, so it would be regrettable to preclude that possibility. I imagine that every Member here has been contacted by their local authority returning officer to confirm that they have all been asked to start the process of preparing for European elections. Whether the Government like it or not, preparations are being made for that at this very moment.

The amendment would also preclude the Government from responding to business concerns. I mentioned earlier this evening the contact that I had today with businesses in the retail sector. They were adamant that leaving on 12 April would be catastrophic, leaving on 22 May would be catastrophic and even leaving on 30 June would not allow them to make the preparations that they need. They were talking about an extension until at least March 2020 to enable them to prepare properly. Arbitrarily setting a cut-off date of 30 June would be extremely unhelpful.

8.45 pm

I am grateful to Change UK Members for tabling amendment 16, which has cross-party support, about a people's vote. A cut-off date of 30 June would, of course, preclude a people's vote as well. People who have looked at the matter estimate that something between 20 and 22 weeks would be required to legislate for and hold a people's vote, so a cut-off date of 30 June would prevent that from happening.

Mike Gapes: Even if these amendments were passed, the issue surely is that the Government would have to take them to the European Council next week. If the proposal is for 30 June, we know that that will not be acceptable, because the EU made that absolutely clear. Therefore, instead of resolving this issue before the European Council, if we adopted that amendment, we would have to come back next week and vote on 11 or 12 April on the same matters yet again.

Tom Brake: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. I guess that would just add to this picture of chaos and confusion and of running down the clock that has become a feature of this place in the last few months.

Mrs Main: Can the right hon. Gentleman not see the merit in what I am saying, whereby that very scenario would not happen? It is just that the Prime Minister cannot agree the date. I am sure—given that he has just mentioned 20 weeks or so to get together a people's vote or whatever—each person's agenda has a timescale associated with it. Therefore, if the Prime Minister is offered a date, surely she ought to bring that date back here and ensure that it meets whatever it is that people wish the date to achieve. We are doing this the other way around in the Bill. We are sending her off with a date and mandating her to seek it. I do not see why—that seems ridiculous.

Tom Brake: The Bill specifically does not include a date, but it enables the Prime Minister to go with a date that she has in effect inserted in the "[...]", so it is within her control.

I will draw my remarks to a conclusion by saying that I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Camborne and Redruth—he is not here, so I would not want to cast aspersions—intended the amendment as a means perhaps of ending up with no deal. We know that seeking an extension until 30 June would not be well received by the EU, because it does not enable anything to happen in the time that is left. I hope that that was not his intention, but if this amendment is pushed to a vote today, I and the Liberal Democrats will oppose it on the basis that it would preclude a people's vote. It is very clear around the country now that there is a very strong appetite for such a vote to take place.

Sir William Cash: They say that those whom the gods wish to destroy they first turn mad. I have to say, I have never seen a Bill that is more likely to drive everybody mad than this one, particularly if it is enacted and it then has to be construed by the courts. I really am astonished at what rubbish it is. Remember that we were told that no deal is better than a bad deal. Just to offer an alternative, no Bill is better than a bad Bill. This is a classic case of hubris—of overvaulting ambition in the hands of some amateur draftsmen, producing consequences

of vast import to the people of this country. Having had an exchange with my hon. Friend the Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice), I make the point that if he is right that the Bill could create an extension of five years, it would cost the British taxpayer not less than £90 billion. That is an awful lot of money for a private Member's Bill, an awful lot of money for hubris, and an awful lot of madness that the gods will want to destroy.

Michael Tomlinson: On that figure of £90 billion, has my hon. Friend received any advice recently about whether the Bill would or would not require a money resolution?

Sir William Cash: I certainly have. The Speaker has ruled on the matter, and I take the view that if the Speaker has ruled, even if I am unhappy with the ruling, that means that I need not go into all the details. I could spend the next 20 minutes giving all the reasons that I believe that there should be a money resolution, but I will resist the temptation because I want to get on to the meat of the Bill. The fact that it is known that it could cost as much as £90 billion is, I should have thought, enough to alert a great many people and make them seriously worried about whether they should vote for it, and I hope that they will not.

Clause 1(1) is mandatory, and gives rise to the important constitutional question whether Parliament can direct a Prime Minister to move a motion. That is constitutionally ridiculous. In clause 1(2), to which my new clause 4 refers, the "form of the motion" is not mandatory, stating that the House

"agrees for the purposes of section 2 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2019 to the Prime Minister seeking an extension".

If passed, the provision would permit the Prime Minister to seek an extension, but that in itself would not force her to ask for it. However, neither clause 1(4) nor clause 1(5) sets any time limit relating to when the Prime Minister must seek the extension, or explains how that would be achieved. Is enough time available for all this to be done? The answer is clearly no.

I assume that Royal Assent would be given after the Bill had been to the House of Lords. God knows what the House of Lords is going to make of it. The House of Lords has a Standing Order, Standing Order No. 72. What have the Government done, no doubt with the connivance—if that is not an inappropriate expression—of my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin)? They have simply knocked out Standing Order No. 72, which is an outrageous and completely unconstitutional act.

Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): My hon. Friend has questioned the ability of the Act to be enforced. My Select Committee, the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, put that question to Lord Judge, the former Lord Chief Justice. I asked:

"How would this be enforced?"

He replied:

"I think it could only be enforced politically by the House of Commons. Please do not think for one moment that anybody should be able to seek a judicial review. Not only would it be ludicrous for the judiciary to be involved in deciding a political question, but they would have a way out if anybody took that

step, by saying that there is an alternative remedy—to go back to the House of Commons. That is the only way it could possibly be enforced, in my view. It would be up to the House.”

Is this not a completely useless piece of legislation?

Sir William Cash: It is not only completely useless, but it is rubbish. I see that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) has just come into the Chamber. Let me ask him, if I may, whether he drafted this Bill. He drafted a great many amendments during the passage of the withdrawal Bill itself back in 2017-18, and I noticed that quite a lot of them were so bad that they had to be junked.

Mr Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Con): I have to tell my hon. Friend that I did not draft the Bill, but I think that it is quite fit for purpose. I also note that there are some Government amendments that relate to “exit day”, and which exactly echo the points that I made in the House last summer about the folly of putting “exit day” on the face of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018.

Sir William Cash: The motion cannot be carried until 12 April at the earliest. That means that the Prime Minister is obliged at some stage to seek an extension, but she is not obliged to do so immediately. Unless she does so on 12 April and it is agreed before 11 pm that day, the United Kingdom is out. It will be “Leave, leave, leave, leave.”

Clause 1(6) and (7) are I suppose intended to deal with a situation where the European Council meets on 10 April and seems to volunteer to offer an extension to a certain date. I mentioned earlier—perhaps in a point of order—the role of the European Council in all this. The reality is that the procedure being followed puts the ball back in the European Council’s court. It is possible that nobody will be sensible enough to veto this extension, although they have the power to do so and I trust that one or other of them, or perhaps several, will.

My objection to this arrangement is contained in the European Scrutiny Committee report we put forward last March—a whole year and one month ago. We raised grave concern because the European Council, which is driving a lot of the negotiations, set out the terms of reference and the guidelines and the sequencing. The fact is that the Government gave in on all that and supplicated and went along on bended knee to the European Council and asked, “How much can you possibly let us get away with? What can we be allowed to do that you will agree with?” There were also all the monstrous negotiations conducted by Olly Robbins, who appeared in front of my Committee, and Tim Barrow and others. The reality is that submitting ourselves under this Bill to the decision-making processes and the cosh of the European Council is not only completely humiliating to this country, but has put us in an impossible situation under the withdrawal agreement.

Article 4 of the agreement—which is directly relevant to everything we are discussing here because it is about the governance of the European Union in relation to the UK on leaving—stipulates in terms of the UK that we will be subjugated to the decision making of the Council of Ministers.

I hope somebody on the Opposition Front Bench will take this on board. The Council of Ministers will be making laws for probably up to four years, when this

House, as I said the other day, will be politically castrated in relation to the European treaties, which will have entire competence over us and all laws. We will not be able to pass a single law in contravention of them, and our courts will not be able to defend our voters—our taxpayers—from any of the decisions taken while we are put at the mercy of our competitors during the transitional period, however long that may be.

I have already made the point that the transitional period could cost £90 billion; I do not know the sum, because we do not know what date will be settled on yet. What I do know is that this House will be subjugated—completely neutralised—in the transitional period. I see that the Minister is shaking his head. I invite him to appear in front of my Select Committee and answer on that; I would like to cross-examine him on the question of who will be governing this country during that period, because it certainly will not be this Parliament, I can tell him that.

Mrs Main: Does my hon. Friend share my concern, which is why I tabled my amendment, that the House seems to happily think it can put a date on this Bill and the Prime Minister will go off and secure the date, but the House seems to have lost sight of the fact that we will probably have to take what we are offered—or maybe not be offered anything at all? This Bill seems to me to assume that the European Parliament will take notice of what we wish to happen.

Sir William Cash: Absolutely; the idea of our subjecting ourselves to the European Council as well as to the European Parliament is about as humiliating as anybody could imagine. I suppose we are not supposed to say this but it happens to be true: we saved Europe twice in the last 100 years, yet we are now, as a result of this withdrawal agreement and these provisions, subjugating ourselves to the decisions taken by 27 other member states by majority vote.

9 pm

I see that the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman is chuntering. Perhaps he would like to come to the Dispatch Box and make his point. No, he is not going to, because he cannot understand what I am talking about, because he has not actually got the competence to do so. That is the problem. He does not understand what I am saying and therefore cannot tell his constituents about the “control over laws” issue or the fact that qualified majority voting on the law-making in this country is going to be conducted for a significant number of years without our being able to do anything at all about it. There is no veto power in this arrangement; we are entirely subject to it. That might be a reason the Front Benchers of the official Opposition are voting against this, among other things. Maybe they realise how dangerous it is. It is certainly dangerous for a lot of workers and trade unionists, as we found out in the ports regulation, which went through even though every single trade union in every port objected to it. This is going to mean continuous activity in the Council of Ministers into the indefinite future, or certainly for the next few years.

What will the Prime Minister do, given that clause 1(6) seems to assume that a resolution will already have been passed or at least proposed? As that cannot happen before 12 April, there will then be a motion, after which we have to ask what the Prime Minister is going to do and what the European Council is going to insist on.

But that is not what the Bill proposes that she should do. Frankly, I cannot see how she can do this without getting parliamentary approval. The Bill merely talks about the Prime Minister having to seek an extension, not having to agree to one that is gratuitously offered by the European Council. This is complete madness. In short, the Bill is a complete and total rubbish dump. If it is enacted tomorrow, I will be fascinated to know what the Government will be able to do about it. It will become the law of the land, and I cannot imagine what will happen. I think it was Alice, in “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland”, who said, when asked about things being possible or impossible:

“Why, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.”

This is a perfect example of that.

Then there is the issue of UK law and exit day. At the moment, exit day has been redefined in the statutory instrument that went through—I believe unlawfully, but we will park that one for the moment—and it is now 12 April unless the House of Commons approves the withdrawal agreement. This Bill assumes that that will not happen, so exit day has to be 12 April under UK law. The Bill says nothing about changing that, and as I read sections 20(3) and (4) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, a Minister cannot propose a change to exit day by laying a statutory instrument until the proposed extension date has been agreed with the EU. So unless all this is tied up on 11 April—which seems impossible, as I have just said—how is the UK law to be changed? It must be changed by UK law in those circumstances, of course.

Sir Oliver Letwin *rose*—

Sir William Cash: I would love to give way to the person who generated this rubbish.

Sir Oliver Letwin: I thought it might be productive to intervene on my hon. Friend’s remarks, with literally all of which I disagree profoundly. On this one point, I think it might be productive because there is a fact about this that he will see if he looks at the amendment paper. The Government have tabled new clause 13, which many of us feel is a very sensible proposal and whose acceptance we therefore recommend. It specifically provides for a negative resolution statutory instrument to be substituted for an affirmative resolution SI, in order that it could be made immediately upon being deposited, rather than awaiting the approval of the House. That could obviously be subject to revision later under the negative resolution prayer procedure, but we would all have to be a gang of lunatics not to keep the exit day in line with international law if, as a matter of fact and for better or worse, the Prime Minister had agreed a given date of exit.

Mr Baker: Will my right hon. Friend give way on that point? [*Laughter.*]

Sir Oliver Letwin: Alas, my hon. Friend the Member for Stone has the floor. There has been a discussion about all this, and the Government’s new clause 13 is a perfectly sensible way of solving the one serious point that he has raised.

Sir William Cash: My right hon. Friend says that I have made one serious point, but he is in serious trouble. Every time he gets up and starts interpreting his Bill,

that is likely to be taken into account if there is any judicial review of any of the provisions, as enacted. As all Ministers ought to know—he is the Minister in charge of this day and the various other things that he seemed to have assumed—every time he opines on the question of interpretation, the interpretations that he is making in a rather fulsome manner could be used as a means of interpreting what is meant by the Bill. He ought to be a little more cautious, but I have waited until this point to say so, because he has said quite enough to put himself in serious difficulty on that account.

Having said that, with regard to new clause 4, any motion brought forward under clause 1(1) in the form set out in clause 1(2) may be amended in line with clause 1(3) only to include a date. In a nutshell, new clause 4 would prevent further amendments to Standing Orders and so on.

Moving on to new clause 5, because I want to get my points on the record—

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. Just before the hon. Gentleman moves on to new clause 5, I know that he has a lot to say about the amendments and new clauses, which the House must hear, but I hope that he may do so in an expedited fashion. We do not have a lot of time left, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman wants to hear what the Minister and others have to say.

Michael Tomlinson: On a point of order, Dame Eleanor. You mentioned the time, and a question was asked earlier about the timing for Third Reading. Are you able to advise the Committee at this stage at what point Third Reading will happen?

The First Deputy Chairman: No. When Third Reading is likely to occur is not up to the Chair, but to the House. Based on how things are going at present, my estimate is that a Third Reading debate will not occur, because the Committee stage is likely to take up all the available time. However, that is entirely up to the House. If the people who still wish to speak do so for a short time, we will have a Third Reading debate. If they speak for a long time, we will not.

Sir William Cash: With respect to you, Dame Eleanor, the Bill’s stages have been truncated. You know what I am talking about. It has been rushed through. Not only is the Bill an abomination in its own right, but it is gravely unconstitutional and offends Standing Order No. 14 and so many other conventions, so I am not going to fail make the points that need to be made. I am so sorry, but I these points must be made. It is only 9.8 pm and we have until 10 o’clock, so although I have great respect for you, Dame Eleanor, I am going to make my points. Furthermore, they are matters that are germane to trying to sort out the rubbish that this Bill is generating for the British public. That is my point.

New clause 5 relates to the amendability of motions. Any motion brought forward under clause 1(1) in the form set out in clause 1(2) may be amended in line with clause 1(3) only to include a date no later than 22 May 2019. The new clause would prevent further amendments to the Standing Orders or to the business of the House of Commons and would impose a maximum duration on the extension period. Given what I said earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Camborne and Redruth

about how this Bill would otherwise cost £90 billion, I think we would be doing a great service not just to the House, which is pretty chaotic these days, but to the taxpayer and our constituents by restricting the length of the extension period. If the extension went to five years, according to the potentiality of this Bill, it would cost £90 billion—that is just a statement of fact—which is a very good reason for voting against the Bill.

New clause 5 would place a maximum duration on the extension period, which would be an enormous step in the right direction. In fact, it would be a fundamentally vital provision in the context of this Bill.

New clause 7 deals with the question of European elections, another hot potato:

“No extension of the period under Article 50(3) of the Treaty on European Union may be agreed by the Prime Minister if as a result the United Kingdom would be required to prepare for or to hold elections to the European Parliament.”

I would have thought that many Members would be delighted to support this new clause. I am doing the Government’s job for them by seeking to impose a restriction. I see the Minister slightly nodding his head, which I think means he might quite like this amendment. The bottom line is that, yesterday, I heard the Prime Minister say that we would not want to have European elections.

Michael Tomlinson: As my hon. Friend rightly recollects, the Prime Minister herself made this very point. Would it not be a catastrophic failure of our politics if, three years after the vote to leave, we held elections to the very institution we voted to leave? Is that not why this amendment must be pressed and made?

Sir William Cash: It is axiomatic, and it goes to the very heart of what we are leaving and how we are leaving. The idea that we would hold European elections, which, but for my proposed amendment, are liable to take place, makes me think that this House really ought to vote for new clause 7. I therefore urge the House to consider it as an important, sensible amendment. *[Interruption.]* I see that my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset has left the Chamber. Perhaps my remarks are too unpalatable for him.

Craig Mackinlay: My hon. Friend has ably set out the cost of a potential long extension as being £90 billion, or whatever it might be. Has he considered the cost to the public purse of running European parliamentary elections for what might be a very short time in office for those so elected?

Sir William Cash: I have heard it mentioned that the elections would cost £100 million, which is quite a lot of money for nothing. In some constituencies, as it happens, there have been turnouts of about 19%. European elections are a complete farce anyway. In fact, I think the European Parliament is a complete farce. Frankly, getting rid of the elections altogether would be a massive step in the right direction, and this Bill is the opportunity to do that.

Mrs Main: The public have had no real engagement in the process. I cannot imagine it would be good for democracy if we say to the public that these people will not be around for five minutes because we are all trying to get rid of them.

Sir William Cash: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about that. I could enlarge on the reasons why we would not want to have any European parliamentary elections and why we would not want to have any MEPs—they cost a fortune as well. Furthermore, a lot of them are, by all accounts, engaged in activities that are either useless or very expensive. I will not dilate on that, but it is a matter of fact.

9.15 pm

The European Parliament is a body that has to make decisions about whether or not we leave. I hear Mr Guy Verhofstadt opining and pontificating a lot. I do not know quite what they are going to do about this all when it comes to the decision that has been conferred upon them. There is another thing I find offensive: if we want to leave, we should be allowed to leave without having the sanction of the European Parliament or of the European Council. If one thinks about it, one sees that article 50 prescribes an arrangement where one leaves the EU under the law. It so happens that this is under the European law but it is also under our own domestic law, because the Lisbon treaty Act, as I call it, is itself a domestic enactment that binds us. So for practical purposes the European elections will be taking place within the framework of our leaving the EU under our own domestic law. Why on earth we should imagine that we are going to be caught up in them or even remotely accept the idea that we would be completely escapes me.

When we entered into the article 50 revocation, we did so as a country that was an equal party to the other 27. Yes, there are 27 of them, but in law, because we are the country that is leaving, we are on an exactly equal footing to them, which is why we should never have allowed ourselves to be trapped into the arrangements of the guidelines, terms of reference and sequencing laid down by the EU. As far as I am concerned, it is very simple: we cannot possibly be part of the European elections.

My last proposal, amendment 6, relates to Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. I think it would appeal to the Scots nationalists quite a lot, as well as to the Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Assembly of Wales. It proposes to leave out from “force” in clause 2, page 2, line 7 and insert

“subject to the approval of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly of Wales, on such day as a Minister of the Crown may by regulations appoint.”

David Hanson: When does the hon. Gentleman expect the Northern Ireland Assembly to meet next?

Sir William Cash: That is a very good question, because it may well be after exit day—on my proposals. That is the point. I am proposing amendments intended to provide that democratic element, which is needed by the people of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for being so clear about what is in Scotland’s best interest. Will he remind us as to whether he supported the need for a legislative consent motion or for the consent of the Scottish Parliament before the European Union Referendum Bill was passed, before the article 50 Act was passed or before last year’s great repeal Bill, all of which he supported? It seems to me

[*Peter Grant*]

that he supported an awful lot of EU-related legislation that has been extremely damaging to Scotland, not caring a jot as to what the Scottish Parliament or the other devolved institutions thought about it. Why is it that he now suddenly wants to invoke the right of the Scottish Parliament to be consulted, given that he and his party have trampled over that right ever since the Brexit referendum was thought of?

Sir William Cash: I want to make some trouble. The people of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland might well have strong interest in the extent to which they are involved in this process. My amendment is a means to provide them with that opportunity. I will not contradict what the hon. Gentleman says. Under our constitutional settlement, there is a Scottish Parliament, a Northern Ireland Assembly and a National Assembly for Wales, so I would have thought that they will be extremely interested to know whether they were being cut out of the process prescribed in the Bill. It is not my fault that the Government made proposals and had all the joint committees that the various leaders of the devolved Assemblies complained that they had not been properly involved in. I am giving them a chance to be involved. He may be right about the legislative consent point, but I am right to think that in relation to this crazy Bill it would at least be useful for the people of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to be able to make their contributions in their devolved legislatures. I think that point is worth making, and I therefore intend to press amendment 6 to a vote. Of all the amendments I tabled, that is the one that I want to move most.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: I will be as brief as I can. I want to speak against clause 1 stand part. The clause is the heart and strategic intent of the Bill. It is trying to put this House in a position to stop the United Kingdom leaving the EU on the date on which the Government might want us to leave. There is no question about that.

I very much agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice) who made the point that the process of attrition in this House to limit the Government's negotiating freedom in the end very much undermined their ability to get a better deal and to negotiate from a position of strength. If people cannot walk away from a negotiation they are in, and they have to agree something at the end of it, the other party simply calls the shots. That certainly strengthened the hand of those who want us to have a bad deal. I have made some points in the debate on one of the earlier business motions about the constitutional impropriety of this whole process.

I also invite the Committee to reflect on what this House looks like tonight as we discuss such highly technical issues. The British people expect us to be discussing the big principles of whether we should leave without a deal on WTO terms or sign up to the withdrawal agreement. This particular debate, however, seems particularly obscure and unavailable to voters. It will make this House look particularly out of touch, especially because the Bill is somewhat otiose.

I have argued for some time with colleagues on the Conservative Benches that the Prime Minister has demonstrated little intention of ever leaving without a withdrawal agreement. The fact that the Government

have spewed out a whole raft of information basically about why they do not want to leave without a deal underlines that point. I therefore think that the Bill is unnecessary.

In my comments to my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash), Chair of the European Scrutiny Committee, I pointed out that the Bill is also unenforceable. Just look at the wording of subsection (4), which is that

"the Prime Minister must seek an extension of the period specified in Article 50(3) of the Treaty on European Union".

What does "seek" mean in the circumstances? What happens if the Prime Minister makes a telephone call asking for an extension, says "Thank you very much" to what is offered, and puts the phone down again? How will that process be scrutinised and made accountable? How do we judge what is a serious seeking in good faith, and what is a mere technical seeking? That underlines the total futility of the House attempting to legislate in this way. Our system of government is not set up for Parliament to legislate for detailed instructions on how Ministers should carry out their duties. We tend to make laws on a much more general basis than that. That is why the system just does not work.

Michael Tomlinson: My hon. Friend makes a really important point that builds on other points made during Committee. Has not a further defect been pointed out? There is no timeframe. The Prime Minister is not mandated to "seek" in any manner, or within any particular timeframe, so she could do nothing until 13 April and still intend to comply fully with the Bill.

Sir Bernard Jenkin: Yes, and we absolutely know why the Bill is framed in these very vague terms—it is precisely to avoid its falling foul of rules that require a money resolution for a Bill that gives more specific instruction.

Sir William Cash: My hon. Friend—a good friend—is making very good points. This also gives rise to the question of scrutiny, which he mentioned. My Committee will undoubtedly have to try to work out how to deal with these scrambled eggs; and how will the House of Lords deal with this, given that it has disallowed Standing Order No. 72? Will it truncate its business to such an extent that it will not be able to get this right? Who will get this right?

Sir Bernard Jenkin: I will not attempt to answer that question, because it answers itself. Nobody will be held accountable for what goes wrong as a result of the Bill.

If the Prime Minister goes to the European Council for an extension—I have long been reconciled to the expectation that she will—what really matters are the conditions that come with it. Where is the accountability for the conditions that will apply? Or will she simply accept an enforceable agreement with conditions, and bring it back to the House as a fait accompli, as she did originally?

Mrs Main *rose*—

Sir Bernard Jenkin: I will press on, if my hon. Friend will allow me.

I have addressed the enforcement point, but let me come back to the question of legitimacy. The issue is not just the illegitimacy of the whole process, and the

concept of the House legislating to instruct Ministers in a way that is outside the control of Ministers. As I said, there has been a huge Government campaign—some might call it a fear campaign—supported by the second referendum campaign and other very well funded lobby groups and business interests. The arguments in favour of leaving without agreement have pretty well been disposed of by default. They do not get a hearing. One can think of one or two broadcast outlets that delight in ridiculing perfectly respectable arguments.

I have a document here called “30 Truths about Leaving on WTO Terms”. It goes through all the canards, and it sets out how leaving without an agreement would leave us with an extra £39 billion to spend on our priorities, which over a couple of years would increase the GDP of this country by about 2%; how it would end uncertainty much more quickly; and how every party involved with the Irish border has said that there will be no infrastructure there in the event of a no-deal Brexit. So it goes on. I shall not detain the Committee with those arguments now, because this is not the time to make them; I just make the point that these arguments have simply not been made. Despite that, a very recent poll conducted by YouGov shows that where an extension is an option, 40% would support no deal. Only 11% would support an extension, though 36% would still support remain. The point is that the most popular option in the polls at the moment is leaving without a deal, so who does the Bill represent? This is despite the deluge of propaganda that has been emptied—[*Laughter.*] Opposition Members laugh, but no effective leave campaign has been conducted in favour of no deal, and the Government, who pretended to say they agreed that no deal is better than a bad deal, have not conducted a campaign to reassure voters that leaving without a deal is a sensible option. Despite that, the British people want to leave.

Who in this House was elected to put this Bill through Parliament? Who is this House was elected by saying, “When I am elected, I am going to put a Bill through the House to delay article 50”? The right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), who is promoting this Bill, was not elected by saying that. She was elected on a manifesto to leave, and she is now defying that manifesto and voters in her own constituency, who voted to leave. When the extension option is removed in the YouGov poll, the percentage of people in favour of the no-deal option goes up to 44%, against 42% who are in favour of remaining. No leave campaign has been conducted in this country for the past two or three years, yet that is what the British people think.

9.30 pm

Just imagine if this country had a Government who were really enthusiastic about leaving the European Union and had conducted their policy positively, explaining the benefits of leaving the European Union, if necessary, on WTO terms. Such a Government would be by far the most popular option in the polls today. I believe that if the Government took us out of the European Union on WTO terms, even at this late stage, our party would enjoy a huge leap in credibility with the British people. [*Laughter.*] Oh, not in this House, because this House is full of people who voted to remain and who want to stop Brexit, despite the vote of the British people in the referendum.

Peter Grant: Well, how do I sum that up in 10 minutes or so? I think that “a pile of mince” would do it, in a handful of words.

I want to address some of the absolute nonsense that we have heard from the no dealers across the Chamber, but let me first welcome the fact that they are finally coming out for who they really are. These are the people who campaigned for the various leave campaigns, promising us that we would leave with a good deal—that we would still remain part of the customs union and the single market. That is what the leave campaign was saying. As for the story that there has been no leave campaigning recently, has the hon. Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin) not seen the revelations in the media in the last couple of days about intensive, targeted social media campaigning, funded from who knows where? SNP Members do not know, but I wonder how many people on the Conservative Benches know where that money is coming from.

As for those who complain that we have not had enough time to debate the big issues of Brexit, these are the people who did not want Parliament to have any say at all. They went to court to prevent Parliament from being allowed to see the Prime Minister’s deal before it was too late to change it, and now they come along and complain that there has not been enough time to scrutinise it. These are the people who allowed 19 minutes of debate before the biggest power grab from Scotland ever seen since the introduction of the Scottish Office—19 minutes of listening to one Conservative Minister droning on, and then the measures were pushed through. How many Conservative Members complained about the lack of time then?

I am disappointed—although I obviously accept the decision—that the amendments that would have given some kind of firm reason for extending article 50 have not been selected. The House will need to come back to that in due course. I hope that at some point the House will agree not only that article 50 needs to be extended, but that whatever deal the United Kingdom intends to leave under is put to the people, so that they can confirm whether it is what they thought was meant by Brexit. I can tell the House what most of them did not think was meant by Brexit: they did not think that Brexit meant no deal, because even the leave campaign never said it was campaigning for that.

I will not go through all the individual amendments, but we will oppose anything that says that the extension can only be for a matter of days or weeks, because it is nonsensical to think that the Prime Minister’s bad deal will get significantly better in a matter of weeks. If there is going to be an improvement to the deal, it can come only if we get a longer extension and reset the whole process. The Prime Minister can then do what she should have done almost three years ago, as soon as she became the leader of a minority Government. She can act like a leader of a minority Government, and talk to politicians and parties across the House to find areas of agreement and consensus, before she starts to draw her red lines and paint herself into a corner. Let us remember that the EU has never said that the current agreement is the only one possible; it has said that it is the only one possible given the Prime Minister’s red lines.

The hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) was so enthusiastic about his amendment 6 that he spoke to it for over half an hour—and it felt like just as long

[*Peter Grant*]

again when he intervened or raised points of order—but he forgot to mention that its real purpose is not to give Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland a chance. If he was that bothered about giving the devolved nations a chance, he would have moved similar amendments to all the legislation that is leading to us being dragged out of the European Union in the first place.

The crux of amendment 6 comes right at the end, when it proposes that, consent having been given by the devolved Assemblies—including the one that does not exist at the moment—the Act will come into force on such a day as a Minister of the Crown may decide. Even if Parliament imposes its will on the Government, the Government could completely ignore the Act simply by not bothering to bring it into force. The amendment has some sugar coating to try to fool the Scots, the Welsh and the Northern Irish, but we are not going to be conned by that. We will not support the amendment.

I also have a big problem with new clause 13, which would effectively allow the Government to change the date unilaterally. I hope that the Minister can offer some kind of assurance on the circumstances in which that power would be used. We know that instruments have previously been prayed against by hundreds of right hon. and hon. Members, yet their objections have been ignored and the instruments have been implemented anyway. Can we therefore have an assurance that if the instruments are prayed against by any of the major Opposition parties, or by a given number of individual Members of Parliament, the Minister will guarantee, on his honour and that of the Government, that they will not be proceeded with? We need something as firm as that. It is one thing to get promises from this Prime Minister, but we do not know who will be Prime Minister when the provisions will be considered.

One amendment is intended specifically to ensure that we cannot take part in European parliamentary elections, which have been described as a waste of time. Who on earth is scared of taking part in elections? Who would want the entire nature of our future relationship with the European Union to be defined purely by the fact that we had to get out before—horror of horrors—we gave our people a chance to participate in its democratic processes? Brexiteers have been telling us for 10 years that those democratic processes do not exist, because they deny that the European Union is a democratic institution.

David Linden: Brexiteers say that the 2016 referendum was about giving back control to the people, yet we see the Conservative party running scared of the electorate. Is that not just going against the wishes of the people in 2016?

Peter Grant: Absolutely. As for the idea that we should not take part in the elections because we do not know how long our MEPs will be there, let us remember that some of them are never there anyway. I remember the Scottish regional elections in 1994, which we knew were for councils that would exist for a very limited time, but they actually had a higher turnout than was previously the case, because people were energised and motivated and understood what they were about. If the hard-line Conservatives do not want to take part in European parliamentary elections, that is entirely up to

them, but I do not want my constituents to be denied an opportunity to vote for their representatives in Europe, whether that is for two days, two years or a full parliamentary term.

We will certainly support the drafting amendments tabled by the right hon. Members who introduced the Bill—given how many Lords amendments are often required to sort out the mistakes in Government legislation, despite all the resources that the Government have at their disposal, it is a bit much to be nitpicking about the fact that there were a couple of drafting errors in this Bill. It would have been nice not to have to rush the Bill through the House in such a hurry. It would have been nice if the Government had actually listened to what Parliament has been saying, in Back-Bench business debates and Opposition day debates, for the past three years. They have refused to listen, which is why the only way to make them listen is by Act of Parliament. That is why we will support the two amendments I have mentioned, and I hope to see the Bill go through to Third Reading.

Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab): I will not repeat the general points I made on Second Reading, but I want to briefly outline the Opposition's views on the amendments.

We will obviously support amendments 13 and 14, which are helpful drafting amendments, and will vote for clauses 1 and 2 to stand part of the Bill. We will support the Government's new clause 13 with a clarification from the Minister. Normally we would support the affirmative procedure, but we accept the Government's reasoning in this case, given the fast-moving situation and the need to ensure consistency between EU and UK law. We will support the new clause subject to an assurance from the Minister now that if one of the principal Opposition parties prays against the statutory instrument, the Government will urgently facilitate a debate on the Floor of the House.

We will oppose all the other amendments. Let me explain briefly why. Amendments 20 and 1 and new clause 5 seek to impose different dates. We should have learned from the withdrawal Act that putting exit dates in statute denies the flexibility we might need, and those amendments are clearly designed to frustrate the Bill's objectives. We oppose amendment 21 because we believe it is right for the Government to come back to the House if the EU offers a different date. We oppose Government amendment 22 because it undermines the purpose of the Bill in relation to parliamentary approval to seek or agree an extension.

We oppose amendment 6 because it is designed to frustrate the process and, as Members have pointed, the Northern Ireland Assembly is not sitting. We oppose new clause 4 because it would limit Parliament's opportunity to shape decisions. I am surprised that, after his lengthy contribution, the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) is not here to hear our views on these points.

We oppose new clause 7 because it seeks to put a date in the Bill without saying so. It puts the cart before the horse. We should determine what extension we need and then deal with the consequences—even if that means elections, although that is not ideal—and not limit ourselves in that way. If we need a longer extension, we will presumably want the UK to have a voice in EU institutions—not simply the Parliament, but the Council

and the Commission—and a judge in the Court of Justice. On that basis, we oppose that new clause and the other amendments that I have identified.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker): I shall be brief, as this briefest of Committee stages demands. The Government continue to oppose the Bill, but given that it has reached Committee, I will speak to the Government amendments.

As the Secretary of State set out earlier, the Government have no choice but to improve the Bill and limit its most damaging effects. Our amendment 22 addresses the dangerous and perhaps unintended constitutional precedent that could be set by the Bill, which calls into question the Government's ability to seek and agree an extension with the European Union using the royal prerogative. It is a well-established constitutional principle that Heads of Government are able to enter into international agreements without preconditions set by the House that constrain their ability to negotiate in the national interest. The Government's authority in this matter must not be undermined, as the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice) said.

Exit day in international and domestic law is 12 April. The Bill creates a real risk that we could be timed out and be unable to agree an extension with our European partners and implement it in domestic law. The Bill as drafted actually increases the likelihood of an accidental no deal—an outcome that the House has repeatedly voted against. The new process created by the Bill could mean that we are timed out and no extension could be agreed. For example, on 10 April, the EU could propose an extension of an alternative length. Under the Bill, the Prime Minister must then return to the House to put forward that proposal, but by 11 April—by the time the House has had time to consider that—the Council would be over. We would need to confirm UK agreement to the EU proposal and get an EU Council decision before 11 pm on 12 April, and I struggle to see how we could carry out such a negotiation through correspondence in the 24 hours before we leave. The Bill therefore increases the likelihood of an accidental no deal. We seek to avoid that through amendment 22, which would ensure that the Government can agree an extension, regardless of the process set out in the Bill, in the national interest.

9.45 pm

Amendment 22 protects the Government's ability to reach agreement with the EU on the extension of article 50, and I must remind the House that any extension must be agreed jointly between the UK and the EU. I am concerned about the restrictions that the Bill as currently drafted seeks to impose. I understand that earlier drafts of the Bill contained a provision very similar to the one that the Government are putting forward in this amendment. In her summing up, could the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) address the reasons why that was taken out?

The Government amendment simply seeks to clarify the position on the royal prerogative, ensuring that nothing in the Bill could prevent the Government from being able to seek and agree an extension of article 50, which I believe is what supporters of the Bill actually want. It is also the hoped-for outcome of the process of

talks that have been taking place between the Government and the Opposition, so that we can agree the shortest possible extension to leave with a deal. For those reasons, I urge hon. Members across the House to support the amendment.

To move on to Government new clause 13, I repeat that we have tabled our amendments not because we support the Bill, but because we feel it is important, given that we are in Committee, to improve the Bill and to limit its most damaging effects. Again, the new process created in the Bill means that we could be timed out and that no extension could be agreed. As I think the hon. Member for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield) accepted, the logic of the new clause is to remove the risks of an accidental no-deal situation.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): Will the Minister clarify how he intends to use the power under new clause 13? By my reading of it, the Government could negotiate a very long extension, put it through using the negative procedure and then cut it very short indeed using the negative procedure. What reassurances can he give us that this will not become a power that either this Government or some future Government could abuse to undermine the will of the House and force us into a no-deal Brexit?

Mr Walker: I think the hon. Gentleman misunderstands the nature of the power, which is simply to reflect in the UK the agreement that would by this stage have been reached with the EU on any extension. It is not about setting a completely different date; it is about reflecting that agreement.

To come to the assurances sought by both the SNP and the Opposition Front Benchers, if a statutory instrument under the negative procedure was prayed against, we would of course facilitate an urgent debate in that context. However, we have to bear in mind the reason why we are seeking this change of moving from the affirmative to the negative procedure, which is simply to provide the speed that I think this House would want in the context of a deal having being agreed.

I do not intend to detain the Committee much longer on this issue, but it is worth bearing in mind that the current arrangements require an SI to be debated and approved in both Houses under the draft affirmative procedure, the time for which could put at risk the critical process of approval. New clause 13 therefore seeks to amend the parliamentary scrutiny procedures applying to the power in the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 that can be used to amend the definition of exit day. The scrutiny will be changed from the draft affirmative to the draft negative procedure. It is only prudent that we are able to make the SI under the negative procedure to ensure that our statute book reflects what is agreed in international law, avoiding a crash-out exit. For those reasons, I urge right hon. and hon. Members across the House to support the new clause.

However, I continue to urge Members to reject this Bill, which is not needed to avoid no deal because the Government have already undertaken to seek an extension to ensure that we avoid no deal. Like many colleagues who have spoken today, I want that extension to be a technical one to ensure that we leave with a deal. With that, I am keen to hear from the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford.

Yvette Cooper: I want to respond briefly to what has been a thoughtful debate on the detailed amendments that have been tabled.

To pick up where the Minister left off, I am happy to follow the Labour Front-Bench recommendation to accept new clause 13, given the tight timetable that the Minister will be operating on. It is not a core part of the Bill.

I believe that we should oppose amendments 20 and 1 and new clauses 5 and 4. They all, in different ways, attempt to restrict the Prime Minister's flexibility to put a proposal to this House. Once the Prime Minister has put her proposal to the House, it will at that point be up to the House to reject or amend it. All the points made by hon. Members wanting to restrict the primary legislation can be argued when that motion is put forward. That is the proper time to debate those points.

On new clause 7, I understand the concerns about the European elections, because I personally do not think that it makes much sense for departing member states that are part of the article 50 process to be covered in the same way. However, I draw Members' attention to the legal opinion drawn up by Lord David Anderson, QC, and five other top lawyers, which says:

"The right to participate in EP elections may be derogated from under EU law,"

and lists a series of other points. I understand that there will be political debates about that; I also think that all hon. Members will consider that the most important thing is for us to get this right, rather than be constrained by this issue. Therefore, I do not think that it is appropriate to accept new clause 7. Nevertheless, Members and the Government should take seriously that legal opinion, which lists a series of ways in which it is thought possible, short of treaty change, to avert the UK having to participate in European elections.

Let me turn to amendment 21, in the name of the hon. Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice), and Government amendment 22, which is an important one. The Minister asked me why a similar provision had been included in previous drafts of the Bill. The reason was that in previous attempts we thought that we would be legislating at a much earlier stage and that therefore there might be a period of weeks in which the Prime Minister should not be restricted from seeking an extension of article 50 in advance, if that was thought necessary in order to prepare. We did not want to restrict the Prime Minister's hand in that way. Our concern about how the provision is framed now is that it appears to undermine the purpose of the Bill, and I am not sure whether that is the Minister's intention. Therefore, we should perhaps have further discussions if his amendment is not passed. I would resist it tonight, because I do not want to undermine the purpose of the Bill, although it is obviously important to ensure complete clarity about the Prime Minister's flexibility to take decisions in the European Council, which of course she has.

Mr Robin Walker: I am grateful to the right hon. Lady for that clarification. The Government will still press amendment 22, and we feel it right to do so to protect the powers under the royal prerogative. I can assure her that it is about providing that flexibility. Of course, the process that those on her party's Front Bench and our Front Bench are engaged with might require that flexibility, whatever the House chooses to

do on this legislation. We obviously continue to oppose the Bill, and I should also mention, as I did not mention it in my speech, that we encourage colleagues to support amendment 21.

Yvette Cooper: I would argue that Government amendment 22 and amendment 21 should both be opposed at this stage, but if they do not pass and the Bill passes to the other place, I would be keen to have further discussions with the Minister about how we can ensure appropriate clarity for something that I think we all want to see and ensure that the Government can do this in an orderly way.

On that basis, I hope that we can support the drafting amendments to which I have referred. I will personally support new clause 13, but would urge the Committee to resist the other amendments and hope that there can be further constructive discussions to ensure that the Bill does what we want it to do, which is simply to support the Prime Minister's work to avert no deal and to ensure that we do not end up putting our constituents at risk during the important process that the Prime Minister has instigated, which we hope can successfully achieve agreement on a way forward.

Amendment 13 agreed to.

Amendment proposed: 21, page 1, line 21, leave out subsections (6) and (7)—(*George Eustice.*)

The Committee divided: Ayes 304, Noes 313.

Division No. 405]

[9.54 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel	Campbell, Mr Gregory
Afolami, Bim	Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Afriyie, Adam	Cartlidge, James
Aldous, Peter	Cash, Sir William
Allan, Lucy	Caulfield, Maria
Amess, Sir David	Chalk, Alex
Andrew, Stuart	Chishti, Rehman
Argar, Edward	Chope, Sir Christopher
Atkins, Victoria	Churchill, Jo
Austin, Ian	Clark, Colin
Bacon, Mr Richard	Clark, rh Greg
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi	Clarke, Mr Simon
Baker, Mr Steve	Cleverly, James
Baldwin, Harriett	Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Barclay, rh Stephen	Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Baron, Mr John	Collins, Damian
Bellingham, Sir Henry	Costa, Alberto
Benyon, rh Richard	Courts, Robert
Beresford, Sir Paul	Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
Berry, Jake	Crabb, rh Stephen
Blackman, Bob	Crouch, Tracey
Blunt, Crispin	Davies, Chris
Bone, Mr Peter	Davies, David T. C.
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Davies, Glyn
Bowie, Andrew	Davies, Mims
Bradley, Ben	Davies, Philip
Bradley, rh Karen	Davis, rh Mr David
Brady, Sir Graham	Dinenage, Caroline
Braverman, Suella	Docherty, Leo
Brereton, Jack	Dodds, rh Nigel
Bridgen, Andrew	Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Brokenshire, rh James	Donelan, Michelle
Bruce, Fiona	Dorries, Ms Nadine
Buckland, Robert	Double, Steve
Burghart, Alex	Dowden, Oliver
Burns, Conor	Doyle-Price, Jackie
Cairns, rh Alun	Drax, Richard

Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, rh Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Field, rh Frank
 Field, rh Mark
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freer, Mike
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pngelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, Scott
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryl
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Paisley, Ian

Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, rh Claire
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Rutley, David
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Spencer, Mark

Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomson, Ross
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy

Tellers for the Ayes:
 Wendy Morton and
 Craig Whittaker

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Allen, Heidi
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bardell, Hannah
 Bebb, Guto
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Berger, Luciana (*Proxy vote
 cast by Mr Chris Leslie*)
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Boles, Nick
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben

Brake, rh Tom
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brine, Steve
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burden, Richard
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Chapman, Jenny
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna

Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ann
Cooper, Julie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crausby, Sir David
Crawley, Angela
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Alex
Cunningham, Mr Jim
Daby, Janet
Dakin, Nic
Davey, rh Sir Edward
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
De Piero, Gloria
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dent Coad, Emma
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Drew, Dr David
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellman, Dame Louise
Elmore, Chris
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farrelly, Paul
Farron, Tim
Fellows, Marion
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fletcher, Colleen
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Frith, James
Furniss, Gill
Gaffney, Hugh
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
George, Ruth
Gethins, Stephen
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glindon, Mary
Godsiff, Mr Roger
Goodman, Helen
Grady, Patrick
Grant, Peter
Gray, Neil
Green, Kate
Greening, rh Justine
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret

Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffith, Nia
Grogan, John
Gwynne, Andrew
Gyimah, Mr Sam
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanson, rh David
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Hayman, Sue
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hermon, Lady
Hill, Mike
Hillier, Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hosie, Stewart
Howarth, rh Mr George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, Diana
Jones, Darren (*Proxy vote cast by Kerry McCarthy*)
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Graham P.
Jones, Helen
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Sarah
Jones, Susan Elan
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, Afzal
Killen, Ged
Kinnock, Stephen
Kyle, Peter
Laird, Lesley
Lake, Ben
Lamb, rh Norman
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Lee, Karen
Lee, Dr Phillip
Leslie, Mr Chris
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Lewis, Mr Ivan
Linden, David
Lloyd, Stephen
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lucas, Ian C.
Lynch, Holly
MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Marsden, Gordon

Martin, Sandy
Maskell, Rachael
Masterton, Paul
Matheson, Christian
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McInnes, Liz
McKinnell, Catherine
McMahon, Jim
McMorris, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Monaghan, Carol
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Nandy, Lisa
Newlands, Gavin
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
O'Mara, Jared
Onasanya, Fiona
Onn, Melanie
Onwurah, Chi
Osamor, Kate
Owen, Albert
Peacock, Stephanie
Pearce, Teresa
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Toby
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Pidcock, Laura
Platt, Jo
Pollard, Luke
Pound, Stephen
Powell, Lucy
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rashid, Faisal
Rayner, Angela
Reed, Mr Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Emma
Reynolds, Jonathan
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Rodda, Matt
Rowley, Danielle
Ruane, Chris
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd

Ryan, rh Joan
Sandbach, Antoinette
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheppard, Tommy
Sherriff, Paula
Shuker, Mr Gavin
Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast by Vicky Foxcroft*)
Skinner, Mr Dennis
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Angela
Smith, Cat
Smith, Eleanor
Smith, Laura
Smith, Owen
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Soubry, rh Anna
Spellar, rh John
Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
Stammer, rh Keir
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Sweeney, Mr Paul
Swinson, Jo
Tami, rh Mark
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Timms, rh Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Tugendhat, Tom
Turley, Anna
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Stephen
Twist, Liz
Umunna, Chuka
Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
Vaz, rh Keith
Vaz, Valerie
Walker, Thelma
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitfield, Martin
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Williams, Hywel
Williams, Dr Paul
Williamson, Chris
Wilson, Phil
Wishart, Pete
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Woodcock, John
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:

Nick Smith and
Jeff Smith

Question accordingly negated.

10.11 pm

Proceedings interrupted, (Programme Order, this day).

The Chair put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that time (Standing Order No. 83D).

Amendment proposed: No. 22, page 2, line 3, at end insert—

“() Nothing in this section prevents a Minister of the Crown from seeking, or agreeing to, an extension of the period specified in Article 50(3) of the Treaty on European Union otherwise than in accordance with this section.”—(*Stephen Barclay.*)

This amendment ensures that the Bill does not limit the powers that a Minister of the Crown would otherwise have to seek, or agree to, an extension of the Article 50(3) period.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Committee divided: Ayes 220, Noes 400.

Division No. 406]

[10.11 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel	Ellis, Michael
Afolami, Bim	Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Aldous, Peter	Eustice, George
Allan, Lucy	Evans, Mr Nigel
Andrew, Stuart	Evennett, rh Sir David
Argar, Edward	Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Atkins, Victoria	Field, rh Frank
Austin, Ian	Field, rh Mark
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi	Flint, rh Caroline
Baldwin, Harriett	Ford, Vicky
Barclay, rh Stephen	Foster, Kevin
Baron, Mr John	Fox, rh Dr Liam
Bellingham, Sir Henry	Francois, rh Mr Mark
Benyon, rh Richard	Frazer, Lucy
Beresford, Sir Paul	Freer, Mike
Berry, Jake	Gale, rh Sir Roger
Blackman, Bob	Garnier, Mark
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Gauke, rh Mr David
Bowie, Andrew	Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Bradley, rh Karen	Gibb, rh Nick
Brereton, Jack	Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Brine, Steve	Glen, John
Brokenshire, rh James	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Bruce, Fiona	Gove, rh Michael
Buckland, Robert	Graham, Luke
Burghart, Alex	Graham, Richard
Cairns, rh Alun	Grant, Bill
Cartlidge, James	Grant, Mrs Helen
Chalk, Alex	Grayling, rh Chris
Chope, Sir Christopher	Green, rh Damian
Churchill, Jo	Griffiths, Andrew
Clark, Colin	Hair, Kirstene
Clark, rh Greg	Halfon, rh Robert
Cleverly, James	Hall, Luke
Coffey, Dr Thérèse	Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Collins, Damian	Hammond, Stephen
Costa, Alberto	Hancock, rh Matt
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey	Hands, rh Greg
Crabb, rh Stephen	Harris, Rebecca
Davies, David T. C.	Harrison, Trudy
Davies, Glyn	Hart, Simon
Davies, Mims	Hayes, rh Sir John
Dinenage, Caroline	Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Docherty, Leo	Heapey, James
Donelan, Michelle	Heaton-Harris, Chris
Dorries, Ms Nadine	Heaton-Jones, Peter
Dowden, Oliver	Henderson, Gordon
Doyle-Price, Jackie	Herbert, rh Nick
Drax, Richard	Hinds, rh Damian
Duguid, David	Hoare, Simon
Duncan, rh Sir Alan	Hollingbery, George
Dunne, rh Mr Philip	Hollinrake, Kevin

Hopkins, Kelvin	Parish, Neil
Howell, John	Pawsey, Mark
Huddleston, Nigel	Penrose, John
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy	Percy, Andrew
Hurd, rh Mr Nick	Perry, rh Claire
Jack, Mr Alister	Philp, Chris
James, Margot	Pincher, rh Christopher
Javid, rh Sajid	Poulter, Dr Dan
Jenrick, Robert	Pow, Rebecca
Johnson, Dr Caroline	Prentis, Victoria
Jones, Andrew	Prisk, Mr Mark
Jones, Mr Marcus	Quin, Jeremy
Kawczynski, Daniel	Robinson, Mary
Keegan, Gillian	Ross, Douglas
Kennedy, Seema	Rudd, rh Amber
Kerr, Stephen	Rutley, David
Knight, rh Sir Greg	Scully, Paul
Knight, Julian	Seely, Mr Bob
Kwarteng, Kwasi	Selous, Andrew
Lamont, John	Sharma, Alok
Lancaster, rh Mark	Shelbrooke, Alec
Latham, Mrs Pauline	Simpson, rh Mr Keith
Leadsom, rh Andrea	Skidmore, Chris
Lefroy, Jeremy	Smith, Chloe
Leigh, rh Sir Edward	Smith, rh Julian
Lewis, rh Brandon	Snell, Gareth
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian	Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Lidington, rh Mr David	Spencer, Mark
Little Pengelly, Emma	Stephenson, Andrew
Lopresti, Jack	Stevenson, John
Loughton, Tim	Stewart, Bob
Maclean, Rachel	Stewart, Iain
Main, Mrs Anne	Stewart, Rory
Mak, Alan	Streeter, Sir Gary
Malthouse, Kit	Stride, rh Mel
Mann, John	Stuart, Graham
Masterton, Paul	Sunak, Rishi
May, rh Mrs Theresa	Syms, Sir Robert
Maynard, Paul	Throup, Maggie
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick	Tolhurst, Kelly
Menzies, Mark	Tomlinson, Justin
Mercer, Johnny	Tredinnick, David
Merriman, Huw	Truss, rh Elizabeth
Miller, rh Mrs Maria	Walker, Mr Charles
Milling, Amanda	Walker, Mr Robin
Milton, rh Anne	Wallace, rh Mr Ben
Moore, Damien	Warburton, David
Mordaunt, rh Penny	Warman, Matt
Morgan, rh Nicky	Whately, Helen
Morris, David	Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Morris, James	Wiggin, Bill
Murdell, rh David	Williamson, rh Gavin
Murrison, Dr Andrew	Wood, Mike
Neill, Robert	Wright, rh Jeremy
Newton, Sarah	Zahawi, Nadhim
Nokes, rh Caroline	
Norman, Jesse	
O'Brien, Neil	
Offord, Dr Matthew	
Opperman, Guy	

Tellers for the Ayes:
Wendy Morton and
Craig Whittaker

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Ashworth, Jonathan
Abrahams, Debbie	Bacon, Mr Richard
Afriyie, Adam	Bailey, Mr Adrian
Ali, Rushanara	Baker, Mr Steve
Allen, Heidi	Bardell, Hannah
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Baron, Mr John
Amesbury, Mike	Bebb, Guto
Amess, Sir David	Beckett, rh Margaret
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Benn, rh Hilary

Berger, Luciana (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Chris Leslie*)
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brake, rh Tom
 Braverman, Suella
 Brennan, Kevin
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burden, Richard
 Burgon, Richard
 Burns, Conor
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Chapman, Jenny
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Coffey, Ann
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Courts, Robert
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Crouch, Tracey
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Dakin, Nic
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, Geraint

Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Dodds, rh Nigel
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Double, Steve
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Drax, Richard
 Drew, Dr David
 Dromey, Jack
 Duddridge, James
 Duffield, Rosie
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Elmore, Chris
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Fellows, Marion
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frith, James
 Furniss, Gill
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 George, Ruth
 Gethins, Stephen
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Girvan, Paul
 Glindon, Mary
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodman, Helen
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Green, Chris
 Green, Kate
 Greening, rh Justine
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffith, Nia
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma

Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayman, Sue
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hermon, Lady
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollern, Kate
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Hughes, Eddie
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkins, Andrea
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Diana
 Johnson, Gareth
 Jones, Darren (*Proxy vote cast by Kerry McCarthy*)
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lopez, Julia
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian C.
 Lynch, Holly

Mackinlay, Craig
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Mann, Scott
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Mearns, Ian
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Mills, Nigel
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 O'Mara, Jared
 Onasanya, Fiona
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Paisley, Ian
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pidcock, Laura
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quince, Will
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Rashid, Faisal

Rayner, Angela
Redwood, rh John
Reed, Mr Steve
Rees, Christina
Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Emma
Reynolds, Jonathan
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Gavin
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Rodda, Matt
Rosindell, Andrew
Rowley, Danielle
Rowley, Lee
Ruane, Chris
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Ryan, rh Joan
Sandbach, Antoinette
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Shannon, Jim
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheppard, Tommy
Sherriff, Paula
Shuker, Mr Gavin
Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast
by Vicky Foxcroft*)
Simpson, David
Skinner, Mr Dennis
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Angela
Smith, Cat
Smith, Eleanor
Smith, Henry
Smith, Laura
Smith, Owen
Smith, Royston
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Soubry, rh Anna
Spellar, rh John
Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
Starmer, rh Keir
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes

Sturdy, Julian
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Sweeney, Mr Paul
Swinson, Jo
Tami, rh Mark
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Thomson, Ross
Timms, rh Stephen
Tomlinson, Michael
Tracey, Craig
Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
Trickett, Jon
Tugendhat, Tom
Turley, Anna
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Stephen
Twist, Liz
Umunna, Chuka
Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
Vara, Mr Shailesh
Vaz, rh Keith
Vaz, Valerie
Vickers, Martin
Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Thelma
Watling, Giles
Watson, Tom
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitfield, Martin
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Williams, Hywel
Williams, Dr Paul
Williamson, Chris
Wilson, Phil
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wishart, Pete
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Woodcock, John
Wragg, Mr William
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:

Nick Smith and
Jeff Smith

Question accordingly negated.

Amendment proposed: 1, page 2, line 3, at end insert—

“(8) But the Prime Minister may not agree to any extension of the Article 50 period proposed by the European Council which is later than 22 May 2019.”—(*Mrs Main.*)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Committee proceeded to a Division.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Lindsay Hoyle):

I ask the Serjeant at Arms to investigate the delay in the Aye Lobby.

The Committee having divided: Ayes 123, Noes 488.

Division No. 407]

[10.26 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel
Afriyie, Adam
Bacon, Mr Richard
Baker, Mr Steve

Baron, Mr John
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bradley, Ben
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, Suella
Bridgen, Andrew
Bruce, Fiona
Burns, Conor
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Clarke, Mr Simon
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Courts, Robert
Crouch, Tracey
Davies, Chris
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
Dodds, rh Nigel
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Double, Steve
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, rh Frank
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Girvan, Paul
Goldsmith, Zac
Gray, James
Green, Chris
Griffiths, Andrew
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Hoey, Kate
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Hopkins, Kelvin
Hughes, Eddie
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkyns, Andrea
Johnson, rh Boris
Johnson, Gareth
Jones, rh Mr David
Kawczynski, Daniel
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Lamont, John

Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Little Pengelly, Emma
Lopez, Julia
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Main, Mrs Anne
Mann, Scott
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, rh Ms Esther
Metcalfe, Stephen
Mills, Nigel
Moore, Damien
Morris, Anne Marie
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Paisley, Ian
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Percy, Andrew
Pritchard, Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Quince, Will
Raab, rh Dominic
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Gavin
Ross, Douglas
Rowley, Lee
Shannon, Jim
Shapps, rh Grant
Simpson, David
Smith, Henry
Smith, Royston
Stewart, Bob
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Swire, rh Sir Hugo
Syms, Sir Robert
Thomson, Ross
Tomlinson, Michael
Tracey, Craig
Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
Vara, Mr Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Mr Charles
Warman, Matt
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Bill
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wragg, Mr William

Tellers for the Ayes:

Ms Nadine Dorries and
Andrew Rosindell

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Afolami, Bim
Aldous, Peter
Ali, Rushanara
Allen, Heidi
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Amess, Sir David
Andrew, Stuart
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Argar, Edward
Ashworth, Jonathan
Atkins, Victoria

Austin, Ian
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 Bardell, Hannah
 Bebb, Guto
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berger, Luciana (*Proxy vote
cast by Mr Chris Leslie*)
 Berry, Jake
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
 Blomfield, Paul
 Boles, Nick
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brereton, Jack
 Brine, Steve
 Brock, Deidre
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Buckland, Robert
 Burden, Richard
 Burghart, Alex
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cable, rh Sir Vince
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Cartlidge, James
 Chalk, Alex
 Chapman, Douglas
 Chapman, Jenny
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Coffey, Ann
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Costa, Alberto
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Coyle, Neil
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Dakin, Nic
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Davies, Mims
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Donelan, Michelle
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drew, Dr David
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Dunne, rh Mr Philip
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Fellows, Marion
 Field, rh Mark
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freer, Mike
 Frith, James
 Furniss, Gill
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 George, Ruth
 Gethins, Stephen

Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glen, John
 Glindon, Mary
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Goodman, Helen
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Grady, Patrick
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Green, Kate
 Greening, rh Justine
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffith, Nia
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Haigh, Louise
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Carolyn
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Hayman, Sue
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Healey, rh John
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hermon, Lady
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Hussain, Imran
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, Darren (*Proxy vote
cast by Kerry McCarthy*)
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham
 P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keegan, Gillian
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lee, Karen
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr
 Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian C.
 Lynch, Holly
 Maclean, Rachel
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Mak, Alan
 Malhotra, Seema
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Masterton, Paul
 Matheson, Christian
 May, rh Mrs Theresa

Maynard, Paul
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart
 C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Milton, rh Anne
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, David
 Morris, Grahame
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Neill, Robert
 Newlands, Gavin
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 Norris, Alex
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 O'Hara, Brendan
 O'Mara, Jared
 Onasanya, Fiona
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Opperman, Guy
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Pawsey, Mark
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Penrose, John
 Perkins, Toby
 Perry, rh Claire
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Philp, Chris
 Pidcock, Laura
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pound, Stephen

Pow, Rebecca
 Powell, Lucy
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Quin, Jeremy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Robinson, Mary
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Rutley, David
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Saville Roberts, rh
 Liz
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Alok
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast
 by Vicky Foxcroft*)
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Owen
 Smyth, Karin
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Sobel, Alex
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Spencer, Mark
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevens, Jo
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Streeting, Wes
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi

Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Throup, Maggie
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tredinnick, David
 Trickett, Jon
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Walker, Thelma
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David

Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Whittaker, Craig
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Williamson, Chris
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, Phil
 Wishart, Pete
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wood, Mike
 Woodcock, John
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
 Nick Smith and
 Jeff Smith

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 1, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

INTERPRETATION, COMMENCEMENT, EXTENT AND SHORT
TITLE

Amendment made: 14, page 2, line 5, leave out “2018 Act” and insert

“the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018”.—(*Yvette Cooper.*)
This clarifies the title of the previous Act being referred to.

Clause 2, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New Clause 4

AMENDABILITY OF MOTIONS

‘Any motion brought forward under section 1(1) in the form set out in section 1(2) may be amended in line with section 1(3) only to include a date.’—(*Sir William Cash.*)

This new Clause would prevent further amendments to standing orders etc.

Brought up, and read the First time.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time.

The Committee divided: Ayes 105, Noes 509.

Division No. 408]

[10.47 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel
 Afriyie, Adam
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baron, Mr John
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bradley, Ben
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, Suella
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Burns, Conor
 Campbell, Mr Gregory

Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Courts, Robert
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Dodds, rh Nigel

Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Dorries, Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Mr Nigel
Fabricant, Michael
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Girvan, Paul
Goldsmith, Zac
Gray, James
Green, Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Hughes, Eddie
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkyne, Andrea
Johnson, rh Boris
Johnson, Gareth
Jones, rh Mr David
Kawczynski, Daniel
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Little Pengelly, Emma
Lopez, Julia
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Main, Mrs Anne
Mann, Scott
McVey, rh Ms Esther

Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Metcalf, Stephen
Mills, Nigel
Morris, Anne Marie
Murray, Mrs Sheryl
Offord, Dr Matthew
Paisley, Iain
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Percy, Andrew
Pritchard, Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Raab, rh Dominic
Redwood, rh John
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Gavin
Rosindell, Andrew
Rowley, Lee
Shannon, Jim
Simpson, David
Smith, Henry
Stewart, Bob
Sturdy, Julian
Swaine, rh Sir Desmond
Thomson, Ross
Tomlinson, Michael
Tracey, Craig
Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
Vara, Mr Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Villiers, rh Theresa
Warburton, David
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Bill
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wragg, Mr William

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr Mark Harper and
Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Afolami, Bim
Aldous, Peter
Ali, Rushanara
Allen, Heidi
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Amess, Sir David
Andrew, Stuart
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Argar, Edward
Ashworth, Jonathan
Atkins, Victoria
Austin, Iain
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Stephen
Bardell, Hannah
Barron, rh Sir Kevin
Bebb, Guto
Beckett, rh Margaret
Bellingham, Sir Henry
Benn, rh Hilary
Benyon, rh Richard

Berger, Luciana (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Chris Leslie*)
Berry, Jake
Betts, Mr Clive
Black, Mhairi
Blackford, rh Iain
Blackman, Kirsty
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
Blomfield, Paul
Boles, Nick
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Brabin, Tracy
Bradley, rh Karen
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brake, rh Tom
Brennan, Kevin
Brereton, Jack
Brine, Steve
Brock, Deidre
Brokenshire, rh James
Brown, Alan
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bruce, Fiona
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen

Buckland, Robert
Burden, Richard
Burghart, Alex
Burgon, Richard
Burt, rh Alistair
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, rh Liam
Cable, rh Sir Vince
Cadbury, Ruth
Cairns, rh Alun
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Cartledge, James
Chalk, Alex
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Douglas
Chapman, Jenny
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Churchill, Jo
Clark, Colin
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Cleverly, James
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ann
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Cooper, Julie
Cooper, Rosie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Costa, Alberto
Cowan, Ronnie
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
Coyle, Neil
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crausby, Sir David
Crawley, Angela
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Alex
Cunningham, Mr Jim
Daby, Janet
Dakin, Nic
Davey, rh Sir Edward
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Mims
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
De Piero, Gloria
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dent Coad, Emma
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Dinenage, Caroline
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Donelan, Michelle
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Dowden, Oliver

Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drew, Dr David
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Duguid, David
Duncan, rh Sir Alan
Dunne, rh Mr Philip
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellis, Michael
Ellman, Dame Louise
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elmore, Chris
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Farrelly, Paul
Farron, Tim
Fellows, Marion
Field, rh Frank
Field, rh Mark
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fletcher, Colleen
Flint, rh Caroline
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Frazer, Lucy
Freer, Mike
Frith, James
Furniss, Gill
Gaffney, Hugh
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, rh Mr David
George, Ruth
Gethins, Stephen
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Glen, John
Glindon, Mary
Godsiff, Mr Roger
Goodman, Helen
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Gove, rh Michael
Grady, Patrick
Graham, Luke
Graham, Richard
Grant, Bill
Grant, Mrs Helen
Grant, Peter
Gray, Neil
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, rh Damian
Green, Kate
Greening, rh Justine
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffith, Nia
Grogan, John
Gwynne, Andrew

Gyimah, Mr Sam
Haigh, Louise
Hair, Kirstene
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hamilton, Fabian
Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hanson, rh David
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Carolyn
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Simon
Hayes, Helen
Hayes, rh Sir John
Hayman, Sue
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Healey, rh John
Heappey, James
Heaton-Jones, Peter
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Herbert, rh Nick
Hermon, Lady
Hill, Mike
Hillier, Meg
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hollingbery, George
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hosie, Stewart
Howarth, rh Mr George
Howell, John
Huddleston, Nigel
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hurd, rh Mr Nick
Hussain, Imran
Jack, Mr Alistair
James, Margot
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Javid, rh Sajid
Jenrick, Robert
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Diana
Jones, Andrew
Jones, Darren (*Proxy vote cast by Kerry McCarthy*)
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Graham P.
Jones, Helen
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Mr Marcus
Jones, Sarah
Jones, Susan Elan
Kane, Mike
Keegan, Gillian
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Kennedy, Seema
Kerr, Stephen
Khan, Afzal
Killen, Ged

Kinnock, Stephen
Knight, Julian
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Kyle, Peter
Laird, Lesley
Lake, Ben
Lamb, rh Norman
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lamont, John
Lancaster, rh Mark
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Leadsom, rh Andrea
Lee, Karen
Lee, Dr Phillip
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leslie, Mr Chris
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, Clive
Lewis, Mr Ivan
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lidington, rh Mr David
Linden, David
Lloyd, Stephen
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lopresti, Jack
Lucas, Caroline
Lucas, Ian C.
Lynch, Holly
Maclean, Rachel
MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Mak, Alan
Malhotra, Seema
Malthouse, Kit
Mann, John
Marsden, Gordon
Martin, Sandy
Maskell, Rachael
Masterton, Paul
Matheson, Christian
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Maynard, Paul
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McInnes, Liz
McKinnell, Catherine
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
McMahon, Jim
McMorris, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Menzies, Mark
Merriman, Huw
Miliband, rh Edward
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, Amanda
Milton, rh Anne
Monaghan, Carol

Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Moore, Damien
Moran, Layla
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, rh Nicky
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, David
Morris, Grahame
Morris, James
Morton, Wendy
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Ian
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Nandy, Lisa
Neill, Robert
Newlands, Gavin
Newton, Sarah
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, Jesse
Norris, Alex
O'Brien, Neil
O'Hara, Brendan
O'Mara, Jared
Onasanya, Fiona
Onn, Melanie
Onwurah, Chi
Opperman, Guy
Osamor, Kate
Owen, Albert
Pawsey, Mark
Peacock, Stephanie
Pearce, Teresa
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Pennycook, Matthew
Penrose, John
Perry, rh Claire
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Philp, Chris
Pidcock, Laura
Pincher, rh Christopher
Platt, Jo
Pollard, Luke
Poulter, Dr Dan
Pound, Stephen
Pow, Rebecca
Powell, Lucy
Prentis, Victoria
Prisk, Mr Mark
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rashid, Faisal
Rayner, Angela
Reed, Mr Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Emma
Reynolds, Jonathan
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Robinson, Mary
Rodda, Matt
Ross, Douglas
Rowley, Danielle
Ruane, Chris
Rudd, rh Amber
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Rutley, David
Ryan, rh Joan

Sandbach, Antoinette
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Scully, Paul
Seely, Mr Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shah, Naz
Shapps, rh Grant
Sharma, Alok
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Shelbrooke, Alec
Sheppard, Tommy
Sherriff, Paula
Shuker, Mr Gavin
Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast by Vicky Foxcroft*)
Simpson, rh Mr Keith
Skidmore, Chris
Skinner, Mr Dennis
Slaughter, Andy
Smeeth, Ruth
Smith, Angela
Smith, Cat
Smith, Chloe
Smith, Eleanor
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Laura
Smith, Owen
Smith, Karin
Snell, Gareth
Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Sobel, Alex
Soubry, rh Anna
Spellar, rh John
Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
Spencer, Mark
Starmer, rh Keir
Stephens, Chris
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevens, Jo
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Iain
Stewart, Rory
Stone, Jamie
Streeter, Sir Gary
Streeter, Wes
Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sunak, Rishi
Sweeney, Mr Paul
Swinson, Jo
Swire, rh Sir Hugo
Syms, Sir Robert
Tami, rh Mark
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Throup, Maggie
Timms, rh Stephen
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tredinnick, David
Trickett, Jon
Truss, rh Elizabeth
Tugendhat, Tom
Turley, Anna
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Stephen
Twist, Liz
Umunna, Chuka
Vaizey, rh Mr Edward

Vaz, rh Keith
Vaz, Valerie
Walker, Mr Robin
Walker, Thelma
Wallace, rh Mr Ben
Warman, Matt
Watling, Giles
Watson, Tom
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitfield, Martin
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whittaker, Craig

Williams, Hywel
Williams, Dr Paul
Williamson, Chris
Williamson, rh Gavin
Wilson, Phil
Wishart, Pete
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Wood, Mike
Woodcock, John
Wright, rh Jeremy
Yasin, Mohammad
Zahawi, Nadhim
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:

**Jeff Smith and
Nick Smith**

Question accordingly negated.

New clause 13

**PROCEDURE FOR ENSURING DOMESTIC LEGISLATION
MATCHES ARTICLE 50 EXTENSION**

'In paragraph 14 of Schedule 7 to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 (regulations amending the definition of "exit day" to be subject to approval by each House of Parliament) for the words from "may" to "each" substitute "is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either".'—(*Mr Robin Walker.*)

This new clause changes the procedure for regulations, under section 20(4) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, altering the definition of "exit day" from affirmative to negative procedure.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

The Speaker resumed the Chair.

Bill, as amended, reported.

Mr Charles Walker (Broxbourne) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The House of Commons is about to pass a major piece of legislation without a Report stage or a substantive Third Reading. If the Government did this, the House would rightly be deeply irritated with them, so the House should find no virtue in its actions this evening.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has made his own point in his own way and with his usual sincerity. The matter of virtue is not to be adjudicated by the Chair, but his point is on the record.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. You are our defender of the rights of this Parliament. Surely it is within your gift to make this farce stop and say there can be no Third Reading—no more votes!

Mr Speaker: The hon. Gentleman invests me with powers that I do not possess. I do not know whether I should be grateful to him. If he were right, perhaps I would be, but he isn't, so I can't. I fear we will have to leave it there, but I have heard his dulcet tones, and they will ring in my ears for some considerable time to come. I thank him for what he has said.

Bill, as amended in the Committee, considered.

Question put forthwith (Order, this day), That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The House divided: Ayes 313, Noes 312.

Division No. 409]**[11.9 pm****AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Allen, Heidi
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, Jonathan
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Bardell, Hannah
Bebb, Guto
Beckett, rh Margaret
Benn, rh Hilary
Berger, Luciana (*Proxy vote
cast by Mr Chris Leslie*)
Betts, Mr Clive
Black, Mhairi
Blackford, rh Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta
Blomfield, Paul
Boles, Nick
Brabin, Tracy
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brake, rh Tom
Brennan, Kevin
Brine, Steve
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burgon, Richard
Burt, rh Alistair
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, rh Liam
Cable, rh Sir Vince
Cadbury, Ruth
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Douglas
Chapman, Jenny
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ann
Cooper, Julie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crausby, Sir David
Crawley, Angela
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Alex
Cunningham, Mr Jim

Daby, Janet
Dakin, Nic
Davey, rh Sir Edward
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
De Piero, Gloria
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dent Coad, Emma
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Drew, Dr David
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellman, Dame Louise
Elmore, Chris
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farrelly, Paul
Farron, Tim
Fellows, Marion
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fletcher, Colleen
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Frith, James
Furniss, Gill
Gaffney, Hugh
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
George, Ruth
Gethins, Stephen
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glendon, Mary
Godsiff, Mr Roger
Goodman, Helen
Grady, Patrick
Grant, Peter
Gray, Neil
Green, Kate
Greening, rh Justine
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffith, Nia
Grogan, John
Gwynne, Andrew
Gyimah, Mr Sam
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanson, rh David
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen

Hayman, Sue
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hermon, Lady
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Darren (*Proxy vote cast by Kerry McCarthy*)
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian C.
 Lynch, Holly
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 O'Mara, Jared
 Onasanya, Fiona
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pidcock, Laura
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Siddiq, Tulip (*Proxy vote cast by Vicky Foxcroft*)
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Owen
 Smyth, Karin
 Sobel, Alex
 Soubry, rh Anna
 Spellar, rh John

Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, rh Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaizey, rh Mr Edward
 Vaz, rh Keith

Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Thelma
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Williamson, Chris
 Wilson, Phil
 Wishart, Pete
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Woodcock, John
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Jeff Smith and
Nick Smith

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Austin, Ian
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Barron, rh Sir Kevin
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, Conor
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Cooper, Rosie
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Docherty, Leo
 Dodds, rh Nigel
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, rh Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Field, rh Frank
 Field, rh Mark
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark

Frazer, Lucy
 Freer, Mike
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heappey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, rh Mr Nick
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, John
 Mann, Scott
 Masterton, Paul
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Paisley, Ian
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, rh Claire
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy

Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Rutley, David
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Spencer, Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, Rishi
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomson, Ross
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggins, Bill
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Zahawi, Nadhim
Tellers for the Noes:
Wendy Morton and
Craig Whittaker

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time and passed.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Given the strong feelings that there are on this issue and the tightness of the vote, it is important to say how welcome it is that this has been a very considered and thoughtful debate throughout today. I am sure that that is the way that we want all the debates on this to take place.

The House has tonight voted again to make clear the real concern that there would be about a chaotic and damaging no deal and to support the Prime Minister's commitment to ensure that we do not end up with no deal on 12 April. I am sure that we will be very keen to work with the Government to make sure that this legislation progresses in a way that is sensible and works in the national interest.

Finally, I thank the right hon. Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) and the hon. Member for Grantham and Sleaford for their work on this Bill and on previous Bills to make sure that we could get this far, and, I hope, to help the Prime Minister to persuade her Cabinet and others how important this is.

Mr Speaker: I note what the right hon. Lady has said and I thank her for it.

Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I have heard what the right hon. Lady has said, but it is difficult to argue that

we have had an extremely considered debate when the Bill has been rammed through the House of Commons in barely four hours. That is not a considered debate; that is a constitutional outrage. It went through in the end by one vote. That, to me, does not represent the long-term, settled will of the House of Commons. *[Interruption.]* Someone shouts from a sedentary position “52:48”. There is a difference between a majority of 1.4 million and one. All I would say to hon. Members opposite is that the public will not be impressed by this. Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.

Mr Speaker: I note what the right hon. Gentleman has said. He speaks for himself and conceivably for others as well, and there are people who take a different view, but he has put it in a perfectly orderly way. There is, however, nothing disorderly about these proceedings. I absolutely understand his point of view, shared by his hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) and many others, that this is not a procedure that should be followed, but it is not a disorderly procedure.

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Of course this has been a quality debate, but an altogether too brief one. I know how their Lordships feel about ill-considered and briskly prepared legislation going up to their Lordships’ House in an inadequate state, as I am sure this Bill is, so I place on the record my fervent hope that their Lordships will examine this Bill line by line and explore every possibility for amendment of this legislation for as long as they think is necessary.

Mr Speaker: I note what the hon. Gentleman has said. I am sure that the other place will become aware of his words and will make its own judgment, as he rightly suggests.

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. We started the process of voting at 9.54 pm, and it has taken us until nearly half-past 11 to complete it. I am, of course, making my usual point about electronic voting and how much more efficient the process could be, but there is also a serious aspect in that the catering staff, the Clerks and all the other staff of the House have been dragged here and have had to stay until half-past 11. Surely all Members who are present agree that we need to move into the 21st century and introduce electronic voting.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is nothing if not persistent in making that point. He knows, because I have indicated it on other occasions elsewhere, that I happen to have great sympathy for his point of view: I have said so many times in speeches and lectures around the country. However, I am fully aware of, and very respectful towards, the fact that the judgment would have to be made by the House of Commons as a whole. Each of us can have our own opinion, and the matter may come to be considered in due course. We shall see.

Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I wonder if I can invite the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) to correct what I believe that I just heard her say. She thanked those who had supported the passing of her Bill, mentioning

my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) and “the hon. Member for Grantham and Sleaford”. I am the hon. Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham, and I do not support the Bill.

Mr Speaker: That is a perfectly fair point. The constituency is, in fact, Grantham and Stamford, and the hon. Lady represents Sleaford and North Hykeham. It is a perfectly fair correction, which I am sure the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) will happily accept.

Yvette Cooper: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I apologise to the hon. Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Dr Johnson). It is late.

Mr Speaker: That is very gracious, and I trust it will be accepted in the spirit in which it has been proffered.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I wonder whether it would be in order to place on record the House’s thanks to, in particular, the Clerks and the staff of the Vote Office for the way in which they have received, marshalled, typed up, printed and distributed the papers that enabled us to consider the Bill this evening.

Mr Speaker: That is typically courteous of the right hon. Gentleman, and perhaps enables us to conclude the proceedings on a note of some amity. I entirely endorse what he has said, and I think that that other colleagues will do so as well. Extreme professionalism has been required, and it has been provided. I thank all the Clerks at the Table, and many others who are not currently in the Chamber, for the work that they have done.

PETITION

TV licences for over-75s

11.32 pm

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): I rise to present a petition which states:

The petition of the residents of East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow,

Declares that free TV licences to households with someone aged over 75 should remain for the foreseeable future; notes that this scheme should remain in governmental hands rather than being privatised via the BBC; further that the removal of the free TV licences will have a negative impact on some of the poorest pensioners in the constituency and across the country; further notes that one of BBC’s proposals in the consultation is means-testing the concession by linking the free licences to Pension Credit; further that the Department for Work and Pensions’ own estimates show that nationally 40% (two in five) of those entitled to receive Pension Credit are not in receipt of the benefit and would be excluded; further that access to media, especially if frail or housebound, can reduce loneliness in older age and improve wellbeing.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to reverse the planned decision to end the funding of the free TV licence to households with someone aged over 75 and the privatisation of this to the BBC.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

Packaging: Extended Producer Responsibility

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(*Mr Jack.*)

11.34 pm

Anna McMorris (Cardiff North) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the important issue of extended producer responsibility for packaging, and may I thank colleagues for staying so late after a very busy and exhausting day?

This may sound like a technical debate, and we can make it as technical as we want, but to me the principle of extended producer responsibility is pretty simple. It means that producers of packaging—manufacturers and brand owners—are responsible for the products, and any associated packaging they make or sell, from the beginning of their lifecycle until the end.

Plastic and packaging is everywhere. It is in our oceans, in our rivers and even in our food. We are waking up to the scale of the problem, but we still need to do so much more. With retailers, brands and supermarkets producing far too much plastic and packaging, it is time for an overhaul of the system and for holding those who do not take responsibility to account. The world has seen the horrific footage of trapped turtles and pregnant whales washed up on the beaches of Sardinia with stomachs full of plastic. This is what plastic and packaging are doing to our environment.

Ruth George (High Peak) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. Will she pay tribute to producers like Buxton Water in my constituency who are seeking to use recycled plastic as much as possible? Does she also agree that we need Government and local government to do a lot more to make sure we can sort plastic so we get enough fully recycled good quality plastic that can be used by such producers?

Anna McMorris: I thank my hon. Friend for making an excellent point. We do need to see that systemic change across all levels of Government.

I saw on a recent visit with the Environmental Audit Committee to the Arctic the impact plastic waste is having there, with bottles and plastic waste on those pristine shores.

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): I also went on that Committee visit. In the Arctic in 2017, a new garbage pile was discovered to rival the one in the Pacific. That is our waste going north. Does my hon. Friend agree that we need to improve collection, as provided for in her Bill, and introduce a mandatory deposit return scheme?

Anna McMorris: I completely agree and it is imperative that we in the UK take that action because it is our waste that is ending up on those pristine shores.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing this debate; even at this late hour the importance of this issue cannot be underlined too strongly.

Local councils have a very important role to play, as has been said. My local council of Ards and North Down Borough Council, and Ards Borough Council

before that, brought in the blue bin recycling project. It was extremely successful not just because the council brought it in, but educationally at school level where the children went home and said to their parents, “Let’s do the recycling.” So there are two ways of looking at this: through the councils but also through education.

Anna McMorris: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right, but this needs to come from more than local councils; it needs to come from the Government as well, and that is what we are addressing here.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): I am glad my hon. Friend has secured this debate. Having gone plastic-free during Lent, plastic is now just staring at me everywhere, and I have started working with manufacturers in York. Does she agree that we must start through the food supply chain in particular and work with manufacturers to see packaging change?

Anna McMorris: I agree: we need to see that change everywhere, but there is a broken system at present, and that must change.

We have seen this not only in the Arctic: in the Antarctic too there is that changing climate and environment. It is having an equally horrifying effect. Almost 90% of the glaciers have retreated since the 1960s when my father spent two years there with the British Antarctic Survey, but I am hopeful that the McMorris glacier, which was named after him, will still be there when my children are older. The natural world and his time in Antarctica shaped him, and I remember the stories he told me about that vast and beautiful landscape when I was growing up. They have instilled in me his passion and determination to help to change things.

When I was an adviser in the Welsh Government, I saw the impact that waste pollution was having on wildlife and natural resources, and the effect that it was having on climate change. I was lucky then to be part of a Government who acted quickly and helped to ensure that Wales was the first country to introduce the 5p charge on single-use plastic bags, which has resulted in a 71% reduction in their use since 2011. Unfortunately, it took the UK Government four years to follow suit in England. I have watched the statistics on waste get worse and worse, and this is even more worrying when studies have shown that the UK Government figures have been known to drastically underestimate how much plastic packaging waste Britain generates. A study by the specialist organisation Eunomia estimates that just 31% of plastic waste in the UK is currently recycled.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): I completely agree with what my hon. Friend is saying and I commend the Welsh Government for the excellent steps that they have taken on this issue. Does she agree that it is shocking that some of the plastic we think we are sending to be recycled often ends up in landfill sites thousands of miles away in developing countries on the other side of the world, where it causes pollution by leaching into the surrounding ecosystems?

Anna McMorris: I thank my hon. Friend for making that excellent point. That is absolutely what we are seeing, and we have to stop it by fundamentally reforming the system.

We have seen growing public awareness of the problems with waste, especially since the broadcast of David Attenborough's "Blue Planet II". Three quarters of a billion people worldwide watched that harrowing footage of albatross parents feeding their chicks plastic, mother dolphins potentially exposing their new-born calves to pollutants through contaminated milk, and the whale with a bucket caught in its mouth. Those images were hard-hitting, but necessary to bring about change.

Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making important points on this critical subject. I, too, want to pay tribute to the BBC natural history unit, which is based in Bristol, for its extraordinary work. Back in 2007, it highlighted this problem in the Midway Islands in the Pacific, where we saw the plastic debris that was being found among the dead birds there. I should also like to emphasise the point that things can be done. Companies such as Fortress Recycling in Leamington recycle a great deal of plastic, but black plastic is a real problem for them.

Anna McMorris: My hon. Friend is completely correct. We have to find ways of recycling all waste, or of limiting its use. That is at the heart of the change that we need to make. "Blue Planet II" has inspired changes up and down the nation, with people increasingly moving from single-use plastic bottles to reusable bottles, increasing their use of travel cups and moving away from plastic straws and cutlery.

Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab): Straws can provide examples of extremely good practice. A company in my constituency has won a £1 million contract to provide paper straws to McDonald's. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is a good example?

Anna McMorris: That is a fantastic example, and I hope that businesses in my own, neighbouring, constituency will be able to follow suit. We have had some fantastic local campaigns in the constituency. The initial plastic-free Rhiwbina campaign has now spread to plastic-free Llanishen, plastic-free Pontprennau and plastic-free Whitchurch. Those are all local communities with worried residents and children who are keen to make a difference in their own way, but this only goes so far. The brilliant "Packet-in" campaign from Rhiwbina and Coed Glas primary schools has seen the children collect packets that cannot be recycled and send them back to the chief executives of the manufacturers, accompanied each time by a letter demanding to know why they are not doing any better. However, we know that the reason why is that the issue needs structural, systemic change at Government and industry level. To do that, we need to legislate to incentivise big business and packaging producers to take responsibility for their waste and to ensure that the right infrastructure is there. That is why I introduced my Packaging (Extended Producer Responsibility) Bill which, if passed, would require producers of packaging products to assume 100% of the responsibility for the collection, transportation, recycling, disposal, treatment and recovery of those products.

My Bill would be a much-needed reform to the broken UK waste system, which is not fit for purpose. Introduced by the Conservative Government in 1990, this piecemeal and disjointed system sees a few large companies benefit and masses of waste shipped overseas

out of sight, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff South and Penarth (Stephen Doughty) said, and in all probability dumped into our oceans.

There are two main problems with the current system. First, waste collection is based on a producer responsibility note or PRN scheme. Under the current provisions of the producer responsibility obligations, businesses that handle packaging must fund the recovery and recycling of packaging material in proportion to the amount they have placed on the market. In other words, the more that packaging producers make, the more they pay, which sounds quite fair.

Unfortunately, the implementation of the PRN scheme is far from fair and disproportionately places the burden of waste collection on local councils. PRNs and PERNs—packaging export recovery notes—allow companies to comply technically with the law, as opposed to following the spirit of the law. What I mean by that is that if companies are in possession of a PRN or a PERN, they have the legal evidence needed to state that they are complying with the law, but PRNs and PERNs then become a substitute for businesses meeting their obligations through their own recycling efforts. That then places the burden of big business's waste squarely on to local councils and the British taxpayer. There are no financial incentives for businesses to stamp out the bad practice, because the current costs in the system are so disproportionately low compared with the cost of recycling waste.

To put that in context, the UK's PRO fees are among the lowest in the EU and leave British taxpayers to cover around 90% of the costs of packaging waste disposal. The way that PRNs and PERNs are sold on an open, fluctuating market means that the price can fluctuate based on supply and demand. Due to market volatility, the growth of UK recycling capacity is then restricted. Instead of investment in UK recycling, much of the growth in the waste disposal sector has been achieved through exporting waste and through a growing dependence on export markets.

To put things bluntly, between 2014 and 2016, the average revenue from compliance with the system was about £60 million a year, but the estimated cost of recycling services for a local authority was nearly £600 million. That is not sustainable. We cannot continue to export our waste abroad to countries such as China, which has taken 60% of the UK's plastic waste over the past decade. In 2017 alone, the UK's waste exports had the same CO₂ emissions as 45,000 cars. China stopped all mixed-grade plastic imports from other countries in 2018, so vast quantities of mixed-grade plastic UK exports no longer have an overseas market.

Our councils cannot keep funding the costs of the broken system, especially when they are reeling from the austerity agenda of successive Tory Governments. Due to local government cuts, more than half England's councils have had to cut budgets for communications and collections for kerbside plastics recycling. We need to act now to make our waste collection systems fit for purpose, and many producers agree.

Since I introduced my Bill, I have built a coalition of industry around the positive change that is needed. This has included producers, manufacturers, supermarkets, industry bodies and non-governmental organisations. They all acknowledge that the system needs to change and that they need to take more responsibility for their own waste, but they need several things to happen.

[Anna McMorris]

First, any new extended producer responsibility scheme must have transparency at its core to ensure it is clear where the fees collected from producers and retailers are being spent. The fees should be put back into the UK's recycling and reprocessing infrastructure, and into any communication programmes surrounding it, to make it work. Funds raised within the system must stay in the system, and a single not-for-profit organisation could be established to make that happen.

Secondly, local authorities should not be out of pocket for any recycling or waste collection they undertake. Thirdly, charges on producers should be modulated, varying based on the recyclability of packaging, and with higher fees for using more environmentally damaging materials.

Fourthly, any new scheme should encourage innovation in packaging design and be capable of responding flexibly and swiftly to improvements in packaging production. Finally, local authorities should be supported to improve the consistency of material collected for recycling.

I welcome the much-awaited resources and waste strategy, which was recently published by DEFRA.

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): With the much-awaited legislation expected in 2021, with implementation in 2023, does my hon. Friend share my concern that we heard over the weekend that two thirds of DEFRA staff have been transferred to work on Brexit matters? This must not suffer as a result.

Anna McMorris: I thank my hon. Friend for making that excellent point. I am very concerned about this, and it seems this legislation has a long lead-in time. We have been waiting for it for a long time. The system needs systemic change now, and we are all waiting for it. All our constituents are waiting for this.

I am pleased to see my suggestion of a single body to implement fundamental reform, as outlined in my Bill, has been included in the consultation. DEFRA acknowledges that a "producer pays" proposal to cover 100% of the costs would

"incentivise producers to think carefully about using less packaging, and to switch to using packaging that is easier to recycle."

I am also glad to see modulated fees included in the consultation, but I believe it can go further and faster.

We need to get rid of one of the big flaws of the current system: the huge range of PRN and PERN compliance schemes. There are 52 such schemes, creating a market within themselves. It has been proven that having a vast array of schemes has led to the breakdown and abuse of the system, which needs to stop. A single centralised body could play that role in implementing the new EPR reforms, in ensuring that industry plays a key role, perhaps by sitting on the body's board, and in ensuring accountability within that structure.

We must introduce higher targets so that at least 80% of packaging can be recycled, with the target moving upwards as schemes become more successful. There must also be clear reporting of recycling rates. A broader range of materials should also be included within the scheme. Materials being considered for EPR could and should be expanded to include, for example, the soft

plastic around frozen food. The scope could change in future, being flexible as the system becomes more sophisticated.

We must not forget the devolved Administrations. While the Welsh Government will be working with the UK Government on implementing these EPR reforms, the Scottish Government are storming ahead with their own proposals on a deposit return scheme. It is vital that England and Wales catch up and work together across the UK, avoiding any disruption to producers, consumers and business.

In conclusion, several things in this DEFRA consultation have a lot of potential. Again, I encourage the Minister to look to my Bill. In the light of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's recent damning conclusions on climate change, radical proposals are desperately needed, and the Government can afford to be far more ambitious. How many more dying whales do we need to see before we take the radical action we need? What will it take for Governments to listen and for us to clean up our climate? We cannot just leave this for our children to sort out. It is our duty to take the action that is needed now. We must use our positions to do that, and I hope the Minister and this Government will use theirs.

11.55 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey):

Our 25-year environment plan, published last year, committed us to being the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it. In line with that, the plan includes a commitment to ensure that resources are used more efficiently and kept in use for longer, in order to minimise waste and reduce its environmental impacts by promoting reuse, remanufacturing and recycling. This is explored further in our resources and waste strategy, which I note several Members welcomed and which was published in December. The strategy sets out how we will preserve our stock of material resources by minimising use, promoting resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy.

A central element of the resources and waste strategy is a core set of principles that will act as a framework for reviewing our existing producer responsibility schemes and developing new ones. These include producers bearing the full cost of managing their products at the end of their life in line with the "polluter pays" principle; and using modulated fees or other measures to encourage producers to make more sustainable design, production and purchasing decisions. In accordance with those principles, we made a commitment to reform the current packaging producer responsibility system as an immediate priority, and in February we published a consultation on how we propose to do that. We are consulting jointly with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as our preference is to continue with a UK-wide approach to packaging producer responsibility. But, of course, it has been open to any devolved Administration to develop their own regulations and their own new systems if that is what they wish to do.

Why do we want to reform the current packaging producer responsibility system? In the current regime, packaging producers are obligated to provide evidence that they have met their share of annual packaging recycling targets, which they purchase from accredited re-processors and exporters of packaging waste. As the

hon. Lady pointed out, this is a market-based system, and it has succeeded in ensuring that the UK has met its wider packaging recycling targets at the lowest possible costs to producers and, therefore, to consumers. The UK has reported to Eurostat that 64.3% of UK packaging waste was recycled in 2018, surpassing the 55% total recycling target set within the European directive. However, the Government recognise that the current system does not sufficiently incentivise design for greater reuse or recyclability, and that less than a tenth of the costs of managing household packaging waste is covered by producers.

In the consultation our proposals tie together the broader set of principles for extended producer responsibility and our ambitions for the packaging sector going forward. These include the reduction of unnecessary packaging, the reduction or elimination of materials that are difficult to recycle and the increased recycling of packaging. The hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington (Matt Western) referred to elements of black plastic being involved, but plenty of black plastic is perfectly recyclable. A particular brand called carbon black plastic is trickier to do that with, which is why the industry is working, under our guidance and also with the Waste and Resources Action Programme, to produce further designs, and we are seeing significant changes happening on that already. There are reasons why certain kinds of black plastic will be used, often in ready meals and other kinds of meals: they simply will not melt when they are heated, whereas other sorts of plastics may be easier to recycle on the initial phase but do not fulfil the purpose for which they are intended.

A key proposal is that producers of packaging waste that comes from households and similar packaging waste from commercial and public sector outlets should cover the full net cost of managing their packaging at its end of life. Our definition of full net cost includes: collecting and transporting household or household-like packaging waste for recycling; sorting and treatment of household or household-like packaging waste, where required, for recycling—the income obtained from the sale of recyclable materials would be netted off—treating or disposing of any packaging disposed of in the residual waste stream; providing information to consumers on recycling packaging waste and anti-littering; clean-up of littered and fly-tipped packaging items; and the collection, collation and reporting of relevant packaging and waste management data, including litter and fly-tipping.

The consultation seeks views on two alternative approaches to incentivise producers to make better design choices: modulated placed-on-the-market fees, where producers pay more if their packaging cannot be recycled readily or is difficult to recycle, and less if their packaging is readily recyclable; or a deposit fee, where producers pay a deposit which is redeemable if they are able to prove that the equivalent of the packaging that they have placed on the market has been recycled.

The consultation asks which producers should pay for the cost of managing the packaging at the end of its life. Should producer responsibility be shared across the packaging chain, or should there be a single point of compliance where 100% of the producer responsibility obligation is placed on one business? The consultation also seeks views on how producer fees should be spent to improve infrastructure and increase recycling, including

payments to local authorities and councils, and a mandatory UK-wide labelling scheme that provides clear information to help consumers recycle.

The consultation document therefore includes a proposal that producers would label their packaging with wording to the effect of “Recyclable” or “Not Recyclable”. We are consulting on proposed new packaging waste recycling targets for 2025 and 2030. Those are broken down into targets for specific packaging materials and for total packaging recycling. We are seeking views on four options for governance of the reformed packaging producer responsibility system. One option includes having competitive compliance schemes with oversight provided by a central board. A second option, similar to that suggested by the hon. Member for Cardiff North (Anna McMorrin), is based on a single market organisation. A third option is a hybrid version of the first two. The fourth option involves a single market organisation to manage a deposit return scheme.

Finally, we are seeking views on proposals for ensuring that packaging waste exports are managed fairly and responsibly, and for how a reformed system can be more transparent and the changes to the current compliance monitoring and enforcement regime ensure that a reformed system operates fairly, transparently and to reduce the opportunity for fraud. The consultation closes on 13 May. As of last Friday, we had received 73 responses, and I expect many more to come in. We will carefully review them, and we intend to hold further consultation on our final recommendations in early 2020.

The hon. Lady’s speech took 22 minutes, unfortunately, if understandably, because many of her hon. Friends intervened, so it is difficult for me to answer several of the points made. She will, however, be aware that we absolutely can come up with the proposed new system while working together as the four Administrations. It will be a significant change that I believe will lead to great additions to improving the opportunities for recycling and the circular economy.

As the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mary Creagh) has said, the 30% recycling tax mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor could be a game-changer. The problems of plastic and packaging elsewhere, in particular in export markets, were referred to. Our biggest export to China for waste is through paper. I am conscious of the changes that have happened to plastic and paper, but other markets have appeared. It stimulates the opportunity for secondary markets to develop further in this country.

On the litter that ends up in the marine conservation areas that we all cherish, I want to place it on the record that I was delighted that the Prime Minister asked me to present a Points of Light award to Jason Alexander recently for his work on improving littering and bringing that issue to wider attention. It is also Great British Spring Clean Month, Mr Speaker, and I am sure that you have been out in Buckingham, working with people there. We should pay tribute to the litter heroes.

I assure the hon. Member for Cardiff North that we are working on the proposals, as she recognised. I am confident that together, across the House and indeed across the UK, we can bring those elements to reality.

Question put and agreed to.

12.4 am

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Wednesday 3 April 2019

[MR GEORGE HOWARTH *in the Chair*]

Votes at 16

9.30 am

Jim McMahon (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op): I beg to move,

That this House has considered votes at 16.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Howarth. In November 2017, I brought this subject forward in a private Member's Bill, which sought not only to modernise the age at which people can vote, but to reform political education in schools and much more. After many years of debate and campaigning to extend the franchise, the time has now come to give 16 and 17-year-olds the right to vote.

I feel a great deal of pressure, not because of the grandeur of this place, but because of the young people from my town who inspired me to present my private Member's Bill and to continue the debate after that, because they believe so passionately in this issue. When I presented my private Member's Bill, I had the pleasure of having members of the Oldham youth council in the Public Gallery. They were disappointed that the Bill did not proceed, but I am continually inspired by their faith, spirit and continued vigour as they seek to achieve their aim of extending the franchise to 16 and 17-year-olds.

Across all age groups, people in Oldham generally say, "I didn't know what I was about when I was 16 and 17, so why should we extend the vote to 16 and 17-year-olds today?" It strikes me that we are setting the bar much higher for 16 and 17-year-olds than for over-18s when it comes to taking part in our democratic exercise. If we wanted to be completely flippant about it, we could say that the only test at the moment when it comes to our franchise is whether someone believes what is plastered on the side of a bus. The truth is that there is no real age test when it comes to participation in our democratic and civic institutions. It should be about spirit, commitment and making the effort to be an active citizen taking part in our democracy.

I am always impressed at the quality and tone of the debate in my local youth council and the Youth Parliament. I am also impressed at how much research goes into everyday issues that we might take for granted. These young people are thinking about their lives and what the future brings, so certain issues mean much more to them.

Extending the franchise is not about left or right. Some Conservatives are concerned that a lot of 16 and 17-year-olds will be more left-leaning, and they think, "They're not going to vote for us, so why on earth should we prioritise giving them the franchise, when it could be to our detriment at the ballot box?" I do not believe that that is a robust argument, but it has been used.

When I go to my sixth-form college, Oldham College or my local youth council, there is a genuine range of views across the spectrum of political opinion. It is not the case that all young people are Labour left voters;

there is a richness of debate and challenge when they take part in political exchanges. I genuinely say to our Conservative friends that there is nothing to fear. However, we all need to make an effort to reach out and to convince young people that we are worthy of their vote. That is healthy for democracy.

The fact is that our democracy and our franchise have always evolved. Some 200 years ago, men and women marched from my town to Peterloo in Manchester, demanding the right to vote—no taxation without representation—and for us all to be treated equally. A number of those people did not return home: five people from my town were killed at Peterloo demanding the right to vote. Last year we reflected on 100 years of women's suffrage. In my town, we fought for two years to raise funds for a statue of our heroine, Annie Kenney, not only to remember her contribution, but to remind us that what we too often take for granted today was hard fought for by generations that went before us.

We are not just the beneficiaries but the custodians of those rights—they are fragile, important and precious, and we should value them. However, they come with a responsibility to take on reforms in our generation too. Extending the franchise to be more inclusive is the democratic challenge of our generation, and it is one we should take up. Let us bear in mind that less than 50 years ago, 18, 19 and 20-year-olds were denied the right to vote. Our democracy and our franchise have always been evolving, and we have sought to expand them, rather than to narrow them down, and to include and engage people.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): The hon. Gentleman makes the point about extending the franchise and about democracy being a progressive, ongoing process. On that basis, would he rule out extending the franchise to 13-year-olds? What is it about 16 that means it should be the limit? Why not go lower still?

Jim McMahon: That is a fair challenge. At what point do we draw the line? I would say it is at the point at which young people take an active interest in politics, which is generally when they go to sixth form or college or they begin their life as an apprentice in the world of work. That is also the point at which they begin to pay national insurance, and there is that fundamental point about those who pay direct taxation wanting to have a say in how the Government spend that taxation on their behalf. No taxation without representation—that matters as much for 16-year-olds as for 18-year-olds.

In truth, this is not about 16 and 17-year-olds at all. Under the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011, if we gave people the right to vote on their 16th birthday, it would be another five years until they could vote in a general election. It does not mean that, at the point at which they turn 16, they will elect a Government; it is the point at which they become part of the franchise, taking part in local, mayoral and devolved elections.

Chris Elmore (Ogmore) (Lab): In terms of devolved institutions, the Welsh Government are currently consulting on extending the franchise to 16-year-olds in local government elections and the next National Assembly for Wales election. That is being done collectively, across all parties in the Assembly. It is interesting to see the different approach taken by Government Ministers here,

[Chris Elmore]

compared with the cross-party approach taken in the Assembly. However, does my hon. Friend agree that we must have a franchise across the whole United Kingdom that goes right across the age range, starting at 16? As he pointed out, paying national insurance is quite significant, and people should have a say from the time at which they are required to pay tax.

Jim McMahon: That is a fair point, and I will come on to how diverse the franchise is becoming across the UK.

How many of us, as parliamentarians, receive emails about local council issues, such as street lights not working, potholes and bins not being collected? That shows a basic lack of understanding on the part of people who are currently part of the franchise about where power and responsibility sit. In some cases, they do not know what the council or the Government are responsible for.

Many people also do not understand the role of the judiciary in our politics and democracy. That is why some newspapers can put pictures of three judges on their front pages, calling them “Enemies of the people”, and the general public swallow it. People do not necessarily understand the important role the judiciary plays in terms of checks and balances in our democracy.

A key component of my private Member’s Bill—it was not just about extending the franchise—was about providing democratic and civic education in schools so that every person who has gone through our school system on their route to becoming an adult is fully equipped to hold us all to account. If they do not know who is responsible for what, they do not know who to hold to account. It is easy for politicians, in whatever tier of government, to pass the buck and not take responsibility. That basic education was an important component of my Bill.

Throughout the campaign, we have heard many of the same arguments that prevented the vote from being given to women, the working classes and 18-year-olds in the past. “How on earth will they know what they are voting for?” “Surely if we extend the franchise to women, it will bring down democracy.” There is a common thread between the arguments that were used in times gone by and those used today to deny 16 and 17-year-olds the right to vote.

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): Is the problem not the inconsistency of that argument? In respect of the 2016 referendum, Brexiteers, who are, by and large, in favour of keeping the franchise as it is, often say, “Oh, people knew what they were voting for.”

Jim McMahon: There are lots of inconsistencies in the arguments that took place during the Brexit referendum and that continue to take place. In the political debates we have in schools and colleges with 16 and 17-year-olds, there is a richness—they explore ideas. We all hold street stalls and sessions where we engage with members of the public, and I would say that that education and willingness to reach out should not be restricted when it comes to 16 and 17-year-olds. If politics is to be renewed—we are in quite a depressing state when it comes to trust and faith in our democracy—that will require a different approach.

There are two very different approaches in this place. On the one hand, there is the sense that, if we restrict the franchise to the fewest possible people, it will be purer. We see that in individual voter registration, in the need to produce ID at polling stations and in several other cases. On the other hand, there is a contradiction, because a couple of weeks ago we considered the Overseas Electors Bill, which seeks to give indefinite voting rights to people who do not live in this country but who live abroad as British citizens. There is an inconsistency in how we apply these things.

Luke Pollard (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op): I thank my hon. Friend for securing the debate. On the issue of women being given the right to vote, the first woman to take her seat in Parliament was elected in 1919. She represented Plymouth, Sutton, which is the same seat that I represent. In many cases, the same arguments were used against her standing for Parliament as are used against the fantastic young people who protested outside my office during the climate strike. Does he agree that these young people are passionate and determined and want to take part because they realise that the changes that take place here and in local councils affect them?

Jim McMahon: I absolutely agree. The world of information and knowledge-sharing has changed so much in the time I have been involved in local and national politics. Social media, and the self-organisation that takes place across social networks, are huge, and they connect people across the world, so issues and protests that take place on the other side of the world can be relevant and spark activity here too. I am not sure that our politics has got its head around what that means for our democracy, politics and activism or how we might respond to that. The general sense is that we should expand the franchise, rather than narrowing it down to its purest possible sense, which is what the Government will say they believe in. I believe that our democracy is enriched by having the most participation possible.

In many local elections, only one third of the voting public turn out. If we consider the numbers, not just by ward, but by polling district, in some cases the turnout is 10%. Whole communities are self-selecting to be disconnected from our political process, but that is not their fault—it is ours. We have collectively turned our backs on communities that have chosen not to vote, because we narrow down the type of people we speak to, canvass and reach out to. The debate is about not just extending the franchise to 16 and 17-year-olds, but renewing our democracy more broadly.

The evidence is there. In Scotland, 75% of 16 and 17-year-olds turned out to vote in the 2014 independence referendum. Such was the passion of young people during that campaign that the leader of the Scottish Conservative party professed to being a “fully paid-up member of the ‘votes at 16’ club”.

So this is not a partisan issue. When people take the time to search out and understand the evidence of what is taking place in the UK, it is compelling.

In Wales, young people are due to be given the right to vote too, so if we fail to modernise, young adults in England and Northern Ireland will be denied that which their Scottish and Welsh neighbours have by right. For

our United Kingdom to be truly united—by common rights and responsibilities, and with people having an equal voice in our democracy—we must have democratic equality.

Educating and empowering people will have positive and long-lasting results, and will equip future generations with a refined understanding of our politics, our Parliament, the judiciary and how our country is governed. That knowledge will be carried through a person's life and across generations, and the habit of voting, too, will be instilled at a young age. Extending the franchise will help to increase voter turnout by inspiring young people to participate in political life from an early age.

The Labour party is fully committed to making votes at 16 a reality for 1.5 million young people in our country. It has been included in our three previous manifestos, and there is a real determination to make it happen. Support in Parliament does not stop there, however, because hon. Members from the SNP, the Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru and the Green party are also fully behind votes at 16, as are many Conservative Members. It is a genuinely cross-party issue; we just need the time to make it a reality and bring people together.

I strongly believe that defending and extending the franchise go hand in hand, so now is the time to stop talking about giving 16 and 17-year-olds the vote and to provide time in Parliament for a full debate to make it a reality. If we believe in a United Kingdom, we have to have a united say and a united stake in our democracy. Let us give young people in England and Northern Ireland the same powers, rights and responsibilities that young people in Scotland have, and those in Wales will soon have, and genuinely bring our country together.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr George Howarth (in the Chair): Order. In view of the number of hon. Members who want to take part, I will impose an informal time limit of five minutes. If hon. Members stick to that, we should be able to get everybody in.

9.47 am

John Lamont (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con): It is a privilege to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Howarth. I commend the hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon) for securing the debate and for all his work to promote votes for 16 and 17-year-olds.

I come to the debate as a convert. In my past life as a Member of the Scottish Parliament, I voted against lowering the voting age in Scotland, along with my Scottish Conservative colleagues. We objected not because we opposed a discussion about extending the franchise, but because we did not support singling out the Scottish independence referendum for the trial.

Time has moved on, however, and 16 and 17-year-olds voted in the independence referendum, the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections and our local council elections—indeed, some in the Scottish borders even managed to vote for me. In the last few years, I have spoken to many young voters in the borders at school debates, at hustings, on the doorsteps and on polling day. I have been hugely impressed by their political engagement and understanding. It is clear that they take the responsibility seriously.

There are perfectly valid reasons for keeping the voting age at 18, as there are for lowering it to 16, but many of those arguments miss the point. In this country, there is no single age at which all responsibilities and liabilities are imposed; where we draw the line is largely arbitrary. At 18, we can vote, but we cannot adopt a child or supervise a learner driver.

The argument is not about when we become adults—there is no fixed age at which that happens, and of course, not all 16 and 17-year-olds are equal—but I find it convincing that when the voting age has been reduced, the turnout of 16 and 17-year-olds has been comparable to the electorate at large, and higher than that of 18 to 20-year-olds. If lowering the voting age helps to encourage voter participation in our democracy, that alone is a compelling reason to consider it.

The reality is that 16-year-olds can already vote in Scotland and will soon be able to vote in Wales. Like it or not, the decision has been made in other parts of the United Kingdom and now we have an uneven system across the United Kingdom, which is not satisfactory. I accept the UK Government's position that the voting age should stay the same; that is a perfectly coherent position to take, even though on balance I think it is the wrong decision.

I understand that some colleagues from both sides of the House are looking at this issue from a purely party political angle. Most people—wrongly, I believe—think that young people are more likely to vote for Labour or, indeed, the Scottish National party in Scotland. I would say that, first, if lowering the voting age is the right thing to do, party politics should not come into it. Equally, I point out to my Conservative colleagues that it was the accepted wisdom that 16 and 17-year-olds would overwhelmingly support Scottish independence in 2014, but that was not the case.

In my view, the Conservative party should lead on this issue. We are the party of personal responsibility, and what better way for someone to demonstrate their personal responsibility than by making their mark on the ballot paper? Extending the vote to 16 and 17-year-olds would make a significant difference to these young voters; it might even convince them to vote Conservative as they grow older.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to point out that I believe that the other parties are being slightly hypocritical about this issue. Labour made it illegal for 16-year-olds to buy a cigarette when it was last in power and, similarly, the SNP wants the age at which someone can buy a cigarette to be raised to 21 in Scotland. Indeed, the SNP Scottish Government are trying to appoint a state-sponsored guardian for all children up to the age of 18. The message from those parties is, “We trust you enough to vote but we don't trust you enough to make decisions about your health.”

Danielle Rowley (Midlothian) (Lab): Does the hon. Gentleman think that smoking and voting pose the same risks?

John Lamont: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for that point. This issue is not about risk; it is about personal responsibility and about when people are able to make decisions about whether to vote or how to vote, or decisions about their health. It is about being consistent. How on the one hand can we say, “You have the

[John Lamont]

responsibility and are able to vote,” and on the other hand say that we want to take away young people’s ability to make choices about whether or not they buy a cigarette?

This is an issue that I believe the Conservative Government should take the lead on and I will continue my campaign to persuade them to change their policy.

9.52 am

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Howarth, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon) on securing this debate and on piloting his private Member’s Bill. It demonstrates how ridiculous the processes in this House are that although, in my view, there is clearly a majority for votes at 16, because of the arcane private Member’s Bill system the hon. Gentleman’s Bill will not pass.

It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont), who made a very thoughtful speech up to a point, and then, as is typical of the Scottish Tories, there was the bingo tick box where he bashed the Scottish National party. In many respects, I think that the road to Damascus has been walked by people such as the hon. Gentleman, and although it is tempting for someone whose party has supported lowering the voting age since the 1960s to take the high ground on these matters, it is important that we build a coalition around this issue. I genuinely welcome the tone that he adopted in making sure that there are Conservative voices in this place arguing for votes at 16.

The reality of the parliamentary arithmetic is that if someone put a proposition to the House on legislation for votes at 16, it would pass, so it is very much the case that votes at 16 are coming, which is a good thing.

The issue of votes at 16 is pretty much the first thing that I ever spoke about politically. When a young person speaks at a party conference, they always want to avoid looking like William Hague, but I remember back in 2006—I think it was in Aviemore—that I was a very young delegate to the SNP conference. I spoke about the importance of votes at 16 and I did not do so from an ideological point of view. I did so because I left school at 16 and, as some weird child who had been out campaigning in elections since I was 11 years old, I always found it very difficult on polling day, particularly after I had left school. The night before polling day—I was working at Glasgow Credit Union at the time—I was sitting on the subway, having just been given my pay slip, and I looked at the part about net pay and tax paid, and I thought, “I’m heading out tonight to deliver poll leaflets for an election and I will spend all of tomorrow out campaigning, but I have paid tax to a Government that I can’t actually vote for.”

That is the ridiculous situation we are in: we ask young people to pay tax to a Government who spend it on the health service or going to war, but they do not have the ability to influence that Government. That is where there is an inconsistency.

I will just take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Scottish Youth Parliament, which has done a sterling amount of work in Scotland to campaign for votes at 16.

In particular, I commend the four new members of the Scottish Youth Parliament who were elected to my seat: Lewis O’Neill, Stacey McFadyen, Jason Black and Mashaim Bukhari. Those young people will all try to take forward their views and represent our community. However, in many respects those young people will be limited to doing so in the Scottish Youth Parliament and for some of them that will be as far as they are able to interact with democracy, at least in terms of the Westminster Parliament. That is because, as the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk outlined, we have an inconsistency in Scotland, whereby young people can vote at 16 in elections to community councils, the Crofting Commission, health boards, local government and the Scottish Parliament, but then it stops, because they cannot take part in a Westminster election.

Quite often, I am faced with a situation where I go to schools—I do a huge number of school visits—with local councillors or the local Member of the Scottish Parliament, and the kids who we speak to at a high school will be able to question me, Ivan McKee or Annette Christie, and they can vote for Ivan or Annette, but they will not be able to vote on whether or not I am their elected Member of Parliament. There is an inconsistency there and, as is natural with matters relating to devolved competences and reserved competences, my view is that if Westminster will not do something, it should devolve the matter and we will do it in Scotland.

The hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk spoke about the need for consistency on this issue. I just think that allowing voting at 16 is the right thing to do. Of all the things that I have encountered in my time in politics, it is the one thing that I just cannot get my head around. Why in 2019 are we still debating this issue and having ridiculous interventions, like the one we had earlier on about 13-year-olds? This is a matter of principle and it is up to this Parliament to set things right.

9.56 am

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): Thank you very much for calling me to speak, Mr Howarth. It is a real pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden). If I may say so at the outset, what a pleasure it is to hear this matter being debated in a responsible and uplifting atmosphere, because there will be young people watching this debate and those are the sorts of qualities that have been in short supply recently.

However, I am afraid that I take a different view on this issue to other hon. Members and I will explain why. One of the points made by the hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon) that resonated me was that democracy is enriched by having the widest participation possible. That sounds unanswerable, but it begs a question: what is the widest participation possible? Should 13-year-olds be allowed to participate? I have met some 13-year-olds who speak with great authority on political issues. However, the fact is that we in this House have to make a decision about what the cut-off point for such participation should be.

What should be the underlying principles for that decision? The first principle that we have to grapple with is whether we take the view that it is only adults who should be able to vote, or whether we say that people who are not yet at the age of majority should be

able to vote. I take as a starting point the UN convention on the rights of the child, which is absolutely clear. It says that young people have the right to be treated as children, and by the way that means that they should be afforded the rights they should enjoy as children up to the age of 18. That manifests itself in issues such as service on the frontline, and so on and so forth.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Alex Chalk: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment; let me just develop the point a fraction.

That acknowledgement of the age of majority at 18 is, in fact, reflected across the overwhelming majority of countries that are signatories to the United Nations. We could be forgiven in this place for taking the view that, “Well, actually, the world is moving towards 16,” but that is simply not the case at all. The United States, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain—in all those countries, the voting age is 18. In other parts of the world, things differ; for example, in Singapore the voting age is 21. It is true that some countries are moving in the direction of allowing voting at 16, Austria being one, but they remain overwhelmingly in the minority.

If we want to take the view that adulthood begins at 16, it is critically important that our country does so consistently. Otherwise, we would have the very odd situation where someone would be perceived to be old enough to vote in an election, but when they came out of the polling station they would not be entitled to walk across the road and go into a betting shop to “vote” on the outcome of that election; that would be odd. Alternatively, what about the situation where a 16-year-old, having voted in a general election, would not be entitled to sit on a jury to decide whether or not one of their peers was guilty of a serious crime, such as murder, manslaughter or rape?

My final point about inconsistency is that under the proposals, someone might be old enough to vote but not mature enough—so the law says—to use a tanning booth or buy fireworks. I am not saying for a second that there is not a legitimate argument to be had, but I think the electorate would find it extremely curious if we were to say that a person has the maturity to decide who should be the Government of a country that spends collectively £842 billion every year, yet does not have the maturity to decide to use a tanning booth.

Mhairi Black (Paisley and Renfrewshire South) (SNP): Does the hon. Gentleman think that it is okay that 16-year-olds can join the Army?

Alex Chalk: Of course, they can join the Army, but they are not entitled to serve on the frontline in a way that might put them at risk of losing their life. In some ways, I respectfully suggest that the hon. Lady’s point makes the argument for me. Part of the reason why 16-year-olds cannot serve on the frontline and be at risk of losing their life is that under the UN convention on the rights of the child, child soldiers may not serve on the frontline. That is in recognition of the fact that we take the view that children are children and adults are adults.

I am not suggesting for a second that this is not a legitimate argument to have, but people watching this debate might take the view that there is a broad consensus

in Parliament to move towards votes for 16-year-olds. I do not sense that there is such a consensus and, critically, that view is not echoed in the court of public opinion. Polling tends to suggest that there is not a majority in favour of reducing the voting age.

David Linden: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Alex Chalk: Let me make one last point. Before I came into this place, I spent a lot of time as a barrister, and when I go into schools in my constituency such as Pate’s Grammar School, Balcarras or Bournside and ask, “If you were accused of a crime you had not committed, would you be happy to be put on trial with a jury made up of 16-year-olds?”, the schoolchildren often say, “Perhaps not.” Just imagine the inconsistency. The trials that I have prosecuted might involve post-mortem photos—really grisly and explicit photographs—and we take the view as a society that people aged 16 are not old enough to watch a film in the cinema such as “The Wolf of Wall Street” or “The Silence of the Lambs”, or to see those kinds of explicit photographs in a jury trial. If those people were considered old enough to vote, that would be a troubling inconsistency.

Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP): The hon. Gentleman is making a point about how we need to follow opinion polling. Does that mean that, based on opinion polling, he will be making representations to legalise capital punishment again?

Alex Chalk: No, I do not think that. Of course, it is right to recognise that opinion polls do not determine everything that happens in this place, but I would hate for the impression to somehow be given that there is a groundswell of popular support for votes at 16. That is not the case at all. By all means, let us have the argument in this place and try to shift public opinion if that is where some Members want it to go, but it would be wrong to create the impression that public opinion is with them. I simply do not think it is.

Gavin Robinson: There is a strength to the hon. Gentleman’s argument about consistency, although I detect a change in the overall direction of travel of Parliament on this issue. Could I ask him to return to his point about consistency, reflecting that there is now a lack of consistency with Scotland and Wales?

Alex Chalk: There is, and one could take the view that because the position has changed in Scotland, we should reflect that throughout the entire United Kingdom. That is a legitimate argument, but if one takes the view that the decision in Scotland was an aberration, why would we want to continue it elsewhere? I want to make it crystal clear that Scotland has a very large measure of devolution; it is a country, to a very large extent, and it is important to recognise its differences. *[Laughter.]* Well, it is a country.

Mr George Howarth (in the Chair): Order.

Alex Chalk: If Scotland wants to introduce votes at 16, that is a matter for Scotland, but I do not see that it is an argument for doing so across the United Kingdom. Of course, one recognises the injustice of some 16-year-olds not being able to vote—I have met some extremely

[Alex Chalk]

sophisticated and politically astute young people—but there has to be a dividing line somewhere. If we want to make the age of 16 that dividing line, it has to be consistent across the piece. It is not consistent now, and unless we are going to change our fundamental assessment of when adulthood begins, the case for changing the voting age has not been made.

Mr George Howarth (in the Chair): I do not want to inhibit people from intervening, because I accept that it is a useful way of conducting the debate. However, the more interventions that are made and accepted, the less likely it is that I will get everybody in. I am going to reduce the informal time limit to four minutes.

10.5 am

Danielle Rowley (Midlothian) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Howarth. My apologies for laughing; I am just glad that this debate has confirmed that Scotland is a country. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon) for securing this debate, and for the huge amount of work that he does on this issue. I imagine that it is an honour for his local young people to have such a great representative who stands up for their causes and beliefs.

I will not focus my remarks on what can and cannot be done at certain ages, because I find that argument reductive; it often limits the discussion. Instead, I will focus on what can be made possible, and the huge opportunities that lie in extending the franchise to 16 and 17-year-olds. One of the reasons why I am so passionate about extending the franchise is that it would be a huge step towards ensuring that young people and the issues that matter to them are properly represented in this place, in policy and in practice. Young people and their diverse insights are hugely missing from this place. As Labour's youngest MP, I was very aware during my first year here of the gap between my age and the average age of other MPs, and I am sure that others present will have had similar experiences.

One key reason why young people are under-represented is that far too often, their creativity, energy and focus are not captured by politics at an early enough age. Many young people are not encouraged to see their interests in political terms, or taught about the opportunities that they have to influence the political system. If young people were able to vote while still in an educational setting, engagement with the electoral process would be encouraged and supported, as we saw during the Scottish independence referendum. Currently, the majority of young people leave formal education without having an opportunity to vote, and being able to vote while receiving proper political and civic education is a fantastic opportunity that we are not taking advantage of.

There is much that we can learn from how young people engaged with the electoral process during the Scottish independence referendum. I have covered that topic before, so I will not go into it in depth, but I will point out that during that referendum, the younger age bracket accessed information from the greatest variety of sources and looked at the most information. Research has shown how engaged they were, and some 97% of 16 and 17-year-olds in Scotland who voted in that referendum

say that they would vote in future elections. That is evidence of how turnout can be increased through engaging at a younger age.

Clearly, young people are deeply engaged with political issues, and in some cases are a driving force behind change. In the past few months alone, young people have been a leading voice on many issues, most notably climate change. Thousands of young people across the UK have been taking part in climate strikes. Those young people are informed and articulate, and have a clear idea of the scale and urgency of the problem—a far clearer idea than some colleagues in this place. Their generation is being let down on the issue of climate change by generations of decision makers before them, and they understand how urgent these key issues are, yet they will not be able to vote on them.

One of the signs at the recent climate protest said:

“If you don't act like adults, we will.”

That bashes out the argument that young people are not mature or intelligent enough. I know loads of adults, including a lot of my pals, who are not really engaged in politics and would be quite happy to admit that they do not know the issues inside and out. It is not about how mature or intelligent someone is; that cannot be the test of whether someone can vote.

As a young and newer Member of Parliament and a campaigner, I have felt more affinity with young people out on the streets, taking up placards and shouting about issues they care about, than with some colleagues in this House, especially on the Government Benches. In her initial response, the Leader of the House said that the climate strikes were truancy. It baffles me that someone who cares about democracy, politics and engagement could look at young people taking action and think it is a negative thing.

I will round off my remarks, but there is so much that could be said in this debate. These are turbulent times in politics. We have decisions going on that will have lasting effects not only through the next electoral cycle, but for years and years to come. It is crucial that young people have a say. I congratulate the young people who have been making their voices heard, the Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament in my constituency and all the young constituents who regularly write to me to let me know their thoughts.

10.11 am

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Howarth. The Labour party values our young people. We value their thoughts, determination and wisdom. Some of the best, most informed contributions I have ever heard have come from young people. Their values are well thought through. They hate injustices, and they want a fairer, different kind of society. For this place not to hear their voice is a huge mistake.

I recall my frustration when I was young that other people were making determinations that were so removed from the world I was growing up in, and young people feel that today. We have to heed their voice. For the past few weeks in Westminster, the Government have been putting party and self-interest above the country, and young people can see right through what they are doing. I spoke to some 14 to 16-year-olds, and they understood how the Government are not listening to them.

Alex Chalk: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Rachael Maskell: No, I will not; the hon. Gentleman has spoken long enough. The Government are not listening to young people. They have not had a say and the Government have not even tried to reach out to them at such a crucial time, yet those young people, all being well, will live a lot longer than most people in this place. We are debating their future and they cannot understand why their voice just does not count.

When I meet young people, the issues they want to discuss are the burning injustices across our society. They advocate their points with passion, deep understanding, thoughtful political processing and reasoned arguments that are outstanding and well researched. They also look to the longer-term consequences of decision making, which is rare in this place. I am inspired that young people have such thought, and it gives me real hope. They re-energise me and recommit my focus on the important issues we are here to fight. It is arrogance that denies our young people a voice. They rightly put this place to shame. They put many in this place to shame for not wanting them to have their franchise. The Labour party values that voice and the challenge young people give us all. We will give 16 and 17-year-olds the vote.

Another side to politics that arises from this issue—people should not patronise by saying we need to educate young people first, although I am a massive advocate for political and citizenship education—is that today, it is the young people who are educating politicians. While the Government are self-absorbed in their survival, the young people who they have denied a vote are finding an alternative political voice. It is not a cross on a piece of paper, but something far more powerful. They are taking to the streets and challenging this archaic monument. They are showing Westminster that they have a voice and are going to use it. They hold the power, and they will make the change and use it to highlight the biggest political issue of our time. The climate strikers have just started their campaign, and they will take power and show up this place if it does not respond to the most pressing issue on our planet, which is causing so much conflict in our world. It is causing people to move from their homes. It is causing floods and famine on our Earth. I was overwhelmed by the determination of the 200 climate strikers in York, and I expect far more to come out a week on Friday.

If denied a vote, young people will find another way of doing politics that will surpass this place. They are determined, defiant and demanding change. We all have power, young and old. The question is what we do with it. In order for the climate strikers to have climate change at the top of the political agenda, Labour will not only give young people a vote, but will listen to their voice.

10.15 am

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): Thank you for calling me to speak, Mr Howarth. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon) on his passionate speech and his tenacious pursuit of the objective of votes at 16 in this Parliament. To Scottish MPs, it feels a bit of an antediluvian argument, because the practice is

normalised in Scotland in pretty much every election apart from general elections. Wales is soon to follow, if it has not done so already.

It feels like the direction of travel and momentum is very much in favour of the objective. It is great to see the level of consensus in the all-party parliamentary group's report on votes at 16. That is welcome, and it is great to see the journey and reasoning of the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont) on supporting votes at 16. I do not necessarily agree with his point about libertarian decisions on cigarettes and so on, but it is welcome to see that level of consensus developing in the House.

Thinking of my journey, I was probably quite precocious as a young person. I read newspapers quite young. I used to watch political TV shows. I remember when Andrew Neil started presenting "This Week", and now it is finishing. When I was 12, I was sitting watching those programmes. I was always a bit of a nerd when it came to politics. When I visit schools and speak to young people, I am impressed by their level of engagement with and passionate views about the political system. They are passionate about championing their objectives for life and society and passionate about trying to improve the world around them.

I have seen nothing more moving since my election than the effort by young people at Springburn Academy when two of their school-friends who were asylum seekers were threatened with deportation. Somer and Areeb Bakhsh were children and had lived in Glasgow for years. They had been there all the way through school with their school-friends, and the entire school mobilised to go down and support them outside the Home Office. Thousands and thousands of young people signed petitions to keep their friends in school. That was a powerful expression of the agency of young people. Even though they did not have a vote, they were willing to engage with the political system and fight for their friends. That is the reality of what we are looking at.

We are talking about young people, and their education is not simply about slavishly following a curriculum; it is about championing their understanding and passion, and giving them an opportunity to follow their passion and give it expression in as many ways as possible, including in the political system. That is why votes at 16 is such a positive measure. If we can implant and embed the idea of voting and participating in a democracy while young people are still at school and in an educational environment, that would go a long way to establishing and normalising that behaviour for the rest of their lives. There is clear evidence that is the case in Scotland, particularly when we look at the referendums that have taken place and subsequent elections. The engagement from young people has been incredibly positive. I am fully convinced, as are most people in Westminster Hall today, that it is the way to go. I encourage the Government to look at the evidence in that regard. The APPG's report is compelling.

One of my biggest challenges is that my constituency has the lowest turnout in the UK. Only 51% of my constituents voted in the EU referendum, and only 53% participated in the general election. Looking at the wider issues in society, it is about engaging people generally in our democracy. Why are we so hung up on extending the franchise to 16 and 17-year-olds? There is a much more urgent crisis in our democracy, and that is

[Mr Paul Sweeney]

engaging people, particularly those from working-class and lower socioeconomic backgrounds, in our democracy. The measure would be a small but positive step forward. In light of developments in other parts of the UK, votes at 16 would certainly be an entirely reasonable step to normalise and make things consistent with what is clearly established in the rest of the UK.

Mr George Howarth (in the Chair): To get the final three speakers in, I am imposing a formal three-minute limit on speeches.

10.19 am

Hugh Gaffney (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab): Thank you for calling me to speak in this important debate, Mr Howarth. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon) on securing it.

Over the past two decades our politics has been marked by a decreasing turnout among young people at elections, leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy where political parties focus their campaigning efforts and policy proposals on the older voters who are more likely to turn out at elections. However, I would argue that although young people are not engaging in traditional party politics, they are quite clearly a political generation. I am regularly contacted by young people in my constituency who campaign on the issues that matter to them, such as Brexit or climate change. I regularly meet young people who engage in political activity through trade unions, campaign groups or charities; and I regularly help young constituents who suffer as a result of political decisions, such as the botched roll-out of universal credit.

All the issues that matter to young people and impact on their lives are influenced by decisions taken in this House. That is why we need to look at increasing turnout among young people and extending the franchise to 16 and 17-year-olds. As the Member of Parliament for Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill, I have already witnessed the positive impact on turnout and engagement that can be achieved by extending the franchise. When the decision was taken to extend the franchise to 16 and 17-year-olds for the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, there was a large degree of scepticism about whether it would have any notable impact, yet 89% of 16 and 17-year-olds registered to vote and 76% turned out to vote.

Since the referendum, 16 and 17-year-olds have also voted in elections to the Scottish Parliament and for Scottish councils. In the recent Scottish council elections, I was challenged on why they could vote for me in a Scottish council but not vote for me as an MP. It is good to see that the Welsh Government are expected to legislate for votes at 16. It is the Conservative party that stands as the roadblock to bringing about change. They wanted to filibuster when we were in the other Chamber, so I pay tribute to organisations such as the Labour party, Plaid Cymru, the Scottish National party and all the other parties who get involved in supporting 16-year-olds.

Votes for 16-year-olds are important. Working men had to organise and mobilise through the labour movement, and even lay down their lives in the first world war before securing the basic democratic right to vote. Women

from all classes and backgrounds had to organise and mobilise in the suffrage movement, as suffragists and suffragettes, with many struggles in the face of a hostile Government that used the full force of the law against them. There is a reminder in this House of their struggle for democracy: a plaque to Emily Wilding Davison resides in the Chapel of St Mary Undercroft in this Parliament. It was placed there by the late Tony Benn with assistance from the Leader of the Opposition. It should serve as a stark reminder to all of us in this House of the individual and collective efforts that brought about the democracy that we now often take for granted. In the proud tradition of the Chartists, suffragists and suffragettes, we will not stop campaigning until we finally secure votes at 16.

10.23 am

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): It is a pleasure to speak under your chairmanship today, Mr Howarth.

The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) has displayed all of his skills as a Wykehamist and a barrister to argue that black is white, but that is what they are taught to do. Should I find myself in an English court, I would look no further than the hon. Gentleman to defend me. He would make an extremely good job of it—not that I agree with one word of what he said.

I am probably the person here who is furthest away from the age of 16. My first point is that times have changed. Years ago, when I was at school at Tain Royal Academy in the highlands, the idea of a politician or an MP visiting the school was absolutely impossible. Politics did not enter our lives. We knew nothing about it, and it was not encouraged at school. How very different things are today. The hon. Member for Glasgow North East (Mr Sweeney) has visited schools and he interacts with classes. We all do that and we all see how sophisticated the 16, 17 and 18-year-olds are in discussions.

During the independence referendum, as the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont) said, classroom discussions with voters were extremely sophisticated. All of us who were involved north of the border came away thinking, “My goodness me; they really do know their stuff.” When they came to cast their votes, we must not think for one second that they were ignorant votes; they knew what they were doing. As I gaze around all corners of the House of Commons, I see gentlemen and ladies of much older ages who do not make such intelligent decisions as did the young that I saw during the independence referendum. The same is true, as other Members have said, of local government and Scottish Parliament elections. I have complete confidence in the wisdom of that electorate. I have no problem with it at all. It is absolutely refreshing to see them engage in the process in the way that they do. The UK should be of good heart; it has nothing to fear at all.

I will close with a short anecdote about the one political event that crossed my radar when I was at school. My English teacher, a remarkable man called Jack Paterson, tapped me on the shoulder in my English class and said, “We are having a mock election. You will be the Tory candidate.” That might come as no surprise to Conservative Members. I stood in the Tain Royal Academy mock election. I made an impassioned speech

in the hall as to why people should vote for me and I quoted at some length from Edward Heath's leaflet. Unfortunately, I came bottom of the poll with 18 votes. Perhaps that shows that even then, although I say it against myself, the electorate were quite sophisticated and clever in the way in which they made their decision.

10.25 am

Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): As we have heard, 16 and 17-year-olds are knowledgeable and passionate about the world around them. Participation in free elections is a fundamental right. Despite what the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) says, it is a right enshrined in the convention on the rights of the child, which states that children have the right to participate in decisions about their lives and that it should be age-appropriate. Of course a three-year-old is different from a 16-year-old, but even the convention acknowledges that when young people—or “children”, if he insists on using that word—have capacity, they should have recourse to democratic participation. He was therefore right that we should heed UN and international agreements.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned countries that we should follow: Germany, Italy and so on. Germany, of course, has votes at 16 in its local elections. Italy does not allow people to vote for the Senate until they are 25, and it is even older for certain other roles, such as the presidency. If we are to benchmark from other countries, we will get into a worrisome position. This House should lead and not simply follow. It should take a moral stance and not just say, “What is the lowest common denominator?”

We can look at best practice around the world and in Britain, and at how young people participate. Often, the debate focuses on whether young people have the right capacity and on the group of young people who might not know. Let us talk about the 600-odd members of the Youth Parliament and the 85% of schools with school councils, where young people participate.

I also want to touch on the importance of democratic rights coming first. We should first engage in voting and then enable the other rights and responsibilities and age limits to come in. Eighteen is the worst age to start voting: people leave home and live a chaotic life. Starting earlier means that people will continue to vote for the rest of their lives. If someone votes in their first election, they are likely to vote continuously throughout their lives. An 18-year-old who does not vote is likely to be a 50-year-old who does not vote. A 16-year-old who votes together with the family is likely to be a 50-year-old who votes, and I want to increase voting for all.

10.29 am

Mhairi Black (Paisley and Renfrewshire South) (SNP): I thank everybody for coming, and the hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon) for securing such an important debate.

Like most Members, I regularly meet youth organisations and youth representatives from different areas in Renfrewshire, including people from the university and local Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament. Two things always come out of any conversation. The No. 1 complaint is: “Why can't 16 and 17-year-olds vote?” The second one is adults asking me, “How do we get

young people involved in politics?” That is the one question that I am asked everywhere. It is very simple: we do it by accepting that politics affects them just as much as it affects us.

Surprisingly, I agreed with the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont) that party politics should not have anything to do with this debate. Do not worry—we parted ways very quickly in his speech. I was unsure whether he wanted to lower the smoking age limit or abolish it altogether. All I knew was, as is always the case with Tories, it is all about personal responsibility until the rich are the ones breaking the rules.

Ultimately, I have to ask: why would any functioning democracy fear more people having the vote? The whole point of a democracy is that we have different perspectives. The same argument applied when I stood in this Chamber not that long ago to speak about the minimum wage. We talked about the fact that it is totally unjustifiable that, even though two people have the same tasks and responsibilities in a job, purely because they were born in different years they do not get paid the same wage. That does not make sense, and is in complete opposition to the idea of personal responsibility, which we are always hearing about from the Government. It is exactly the same when it comes to votes. If someone is allowed the responsibilities of life, they should have the same rights.

The hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton correctly said that there is no age test when it comes to participation. In many ways, I serve as an example of that. After we lost the independence referendum, suddenly lots of people were encouraging me to put my name forward to stand for Parliament. My first reaction was: “Don't be stupid—I'm 20. What a ridiculous idea.” What changed my mind was that so many older people who I respected, and whose views throughout their lifetime I respected, said to me, “If Parliament's supposed to reflect society, why is nobody young in it?”

What has been normal for us has to change. I thought that I could not do this job. I thought, “No—politics isn't for me; it's for the adults. All we get is a little pat on the head, and told to go away to the Youth Parliament if we want to get involved.” We need to change that, because the decisions that are made in this House daily have drastic influences on the paths open to people in their lives.

Ultimately, politics is about perspective, and trying to understand as many different perspectives as we can. We cannot understand someone's perspective if they are not even part of the debate. We have seen living, breathing examples of that, and heard about them throughout this debate. In the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, 75% of young people used their vote. The quality of that debate was phenomenal, and it was wide-ranging. Honestly, I could not go anywhere without hearing people talk about the referendum—people of all different viewpoints, backgrounds and ages.

I was on the losing side of that referendum, and I am still banging on about the great influence it had because young people were involved. Compare that with the EU referendum, where roughly 1.5 million 16 to 17-year-olds were denied a vote. They are now seeing their opportunities to work and live abroad snatched away right in front of them. Fundamentally, if someone is old enough to get

[Mhairi Black]

married, have sex, join the Army, leave home, work full time and pay tax, frankly they are old enough to hold a pen at the ballot box.

10.33 am

Cat Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Howarth. We have heard a great many contributions from Members on both sides of the Chamber, and we have had quite a lot of consensus. It is notable that we have heard fantastic contributions from a number of Members from Scottish constituencies. There is a really strong argument that, where people have seen votes for 16 and 17-year-olds work successfully, they have warmed to it.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon) for securing today's debate. He campaigns tirelessly on this issue and is a great advocate for young people in his constituency. They have asked him to raise this issue in Parliament, and he has done so diligently. I enjoyed his comments about his constituency's connections to Peterloo and about the Oldham suffragette Annie Kenney, reminding us that this is about not just extending the franchise to 16 and 17-year-olds but extending democracy and increasing participation.

I shared my hon. Friend's frustration two weeks ago when this House did not have the opportunity to debate his amendment to the Overseas Electors Bill—an amendment that had gathered cross-party support and would have been a significant step towards securing votes for 16 and 17-year-olds. We can safely say that private Members' Bills have not been an effective vehicle on this issue. I therefore welcome the opportunity to debate this important topic, and I look forward to hearing the Minister's response.

Many arguments have been made about the age of maturity. The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) argued strongly on that, and I disagreed with him on a number of issues. I enjoyed his comment that a 16 or 17-year-old is not eligible to serve on a jury. Of course, neither is anyone above the age of 75. Unless we are going to restrict the franchise at the upper end as well, his argument is somewhat inconsistent. Such arguments fail to capture the spirit of the debate. Above all, this debate is about strengthening our democracy, inclusion and how to involve all society in shaping a vision for our country. I believe our democracy would be made stronger by such an improvement to it.

A key reason why Labour is strongly in favour of votes at 16 is that it would help to increase voter turnout and develop lifelong voting habits. A recent study by Demos found that only 37% of young adults in the UK feel that British politics today reflects the issues that matter to them, which concerns me. No wonder we are seeing high levels of voter apathy and low turnout when voters are not directly engaged from a young age and feel unrepresented from their first point of contact with the political sphere.

Alex Chalk: If the hon. Lady thinks that young people have the right level of political maturity to vote at 16, does she think that they have the right level of maturity to buy fireworks? If she does, why did her party vote in favour of banning that?

Cat Smith: The hon. Gentleman is confusing two different issues. One is about our rights as citizens; the other is much more about society, welfare and protection. Basically, there are some things that a person can do that will kill them; however, voting is not known to lead to death, at least not directly. When people make such arguments regarding the right to buy alcohol, cigarettes or fireworks, it confuses two different issues.

It is fair to say that we agree across the House that there is no magic age at which someone becomes an adult; it is a spectrum. The majority of people of a particular age might be of a certain maturity, but we all know fine well that an 18 or an 80-year-old might lack the maturity to do many of the things they are legally able to do.

Mhairi Black: In the hon. Lady's experience, has she—as I have—met many 16-year-olds who have more life experience and understanding in their pinky than half of the people in this place?

Cat Smith: The hon. Lady makes the point that life experience is different for everyone, and all of us come here with very different life experiences. Many 16, 17 and 18-year-olds have experienced far more in their lives than a 40, 50 or 60-year-old, and she is right to make that point.

I must make some progress, because I am aware that I need to leave time for the Minister's response, which we are keen to hear. It is fair to say that there is no silver bullet for improving participation in politics. The way that people come into contact with politics in their formative years is a crucial part of it, but that is not the only thing that we should focus on. Evidence from the Scottish referendum and the 2017 Scottish council elections demonstrated that turnout rates among 16 and 17-year-olds were much higher than among 18 to 24-year-olds. That point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Danielle Rowley), who also highlighted that 16 and 17-year-olds were more likely use a broader range of sources to research how to use their vote, arguably using it in a much more mature way than older voters.

We know that an individual who has voted once is more likely to vote in future elections. The young people I mentioned were aided by the encouragement of their families and schools to become politically engaged, which should be a lesson for us throughout United Kingdom.

"Voting is a habit that is formed early, and we ought to treat it as such...It is important that we take...a progressive stance on these matters."—[*Official Report*, 18 June 2015; Vol. 597, c. 527-532.]

I hope the Minister agrees with those words, not least because she said them in this House in 2015. For that reason, I am optimistic that we will find there is a great amount of consensus between the two Front Benches.

The recent school strikes that my hon. Friend the Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell) highlighted demonstrate that young people are aware of the world around them and are trying to take part in the democratic system, despite not having the right to vote. They have been inspired by a 16-year-old from Sweden, Greta Thunberg, who has risen to international fame for her work on the issue.

I believe that change is imminent. Across the United Kingdom, politicians have begun to recognise the changing tides. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow North East (Mr Sweeney) mentioned the situation in Scotland, which has left us in the bizarre position where 16-year-olds living there can vote in local elections but are denied the right to vote in a UK general election. My hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Chris Elmore) mentioned the Welsh Labour Government, who are seeking to extend the franchise in Wales to 16 and 17-year-olds. There is now a fundamental inequality of rights in this country, because the right to vote has effectively become a postcode lottery—a situation that is morally and politically unsustainable for this Government. It is time that 16 and 17-year-olds had equal rights across our country for all elections.

A cross-party consensus has emerged. I acknowledge the great work of the all-party parliamentary group on votes at 16, chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian, which is about to publish a report highlighting the consensus across many of the political parties that have taken part in the debate. It is important for Conservative colleagues to realise that this idea is not a threat to their party. After the Scottish referendum, Ruth Davidson, the leader of the Scottish Conservatives, described herself as

“a fully paid-up member of the ‘votes at 16’ club”,

having witnessed its positive impact. Since then, various Conservative politicians, including George Osborne, have claimed that there is widespread support for the policy among Conservative MPs and have called on the Government to lower the voting age to 16 or risk losing the support of younger generations.

It is our duty as politicians to catch up with the modern age. It was only in 1970 that the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18, allowing teenagers to vote for the first time in the UK, and exactly the same arguments were prevalent then that are used today to prevent 16 and 17-year-olds from voting. The Government are quickly finding themselves on the wrong side of history. Our past is littered with bold actions, proud speeches and even lives lost to win and defend the right to vote. Given the Minister's personal support for the issue, I hope she will have the courage and determination to convince the rest of her colleagues to do the right thing and give all young people the vote.

10.43 am

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Chloe Smith): I thank the hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon) for securing this debate; I confirm that I will leave a little time for him to conclude it. I also thank you for your chairmanship, Mr Howarth, and all hon. Members who have taken part.

Voting age is a really important topic. Like all hon. Members present, I have followed the arguments closely over the years. I stand here at the age of nearly 37; I was first elected to this place when I was 27; and, like many in this Chamber, at the age of 17 I was taking part in youth forum politics. Crucially, the arguments are not being made only by young people; they need to be considered across age groups and across society, as we have done in this thoughtful debate.

I want to take on some of the arguments that have been made, furnish a little more detail and crystallise the choices that we face. I will come on to how the

Government are setting out to engage and educate young people, which is very important, but let me start with the fact that the Government were elected on a manifesto commitment to retain the current franchise for parliamentary elections. In response to the hon. Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood (Cat Smith)—my Front-Bench opponent but also, dare I say it, my hon. Friend, because we have shadowed each other in this brief for a while—let me say that if we are talking about the core concepts of democracy, one of them is manifesto commitments. Those commitments mean something to people who follow politics, and it means something for us to stand up and say that we should have faith in the decisions that we offer the electorate and expect to defend.

I will address some points that were made about public opinion and then move on to the issues that were raised about the standard age of majority. My hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) referred in passing to the state of public opinion, so let me furnish hon. Members with some detail. In 2004, in one of the most comprehensive reviews and consultations to date on lowering the voting age, the Electoral Commission found that two thirds of people thought that the right age was 18. Instructively for our discussion, it found that more than half of 15 to 19-year-olds agreed. In 2008, the then Labour Government established the Youth Citizenship Commission, which found that although the majority of 16 and 17-year-old respondents were in favour of lowering the voting age, all older categories of respondents were opposed to such a change—an interesting detail.

Jim McMahon: The 2004 Electoral Commission report also recommended that a further review be carried out in four to five years, but that review has not yet taken place. Will the Minister commit to it now?

Chloe Smith: I almost misheard the hon. Gentleman and thought that he said “45 years”, but he rightly notes that the recommendation was four to five years. No, I am not in a position to commit the Government to such a review today, because the Electoral Commission's own review concluded that the age should not be changed and, as I shall set out, the evidence still says so.

In 2013, a YouGov poll of voters of all ages and political views found that they opposed changes to the voting age—even the majority of young people did not want 16 and 17-year-olds to have the vote. More recently still, in April 2017, a very large poll of adults found that only 29% were in favour of lowering the age to 16, while 52% were against it.

The international state of play has been discussed, but I will not dwell on it because hon. Members' examples were well given. The topic that I really want to address, and that the bulk of our debate has focused on, is the age of majority. We have to face up to the fact that 18 is widely recognised in this country as the age at which one becomes an adult. Rightly, we have a range of measures to protect young people below that age. It is a concept in our laws: there is a wide range of life decisions that entail taking on significant responsibility, for which this Parliament has judged that 18 is the right age.

Not only is the Government's stance built on a bedrock of public opinion, from which we take our manifesto commitment, but there is a clear consistency to it. I do

[Chloe Smith]

not think that the same can necessarily be said of all the arguments that have been made in this debate. Either someone is old enough or not—both cannot be true, so which is it?

Let me start with health. We generally seek to protect children and young people, who can be some of the most vulnerable members of our society, from actions—either by themselves or by others—that could be detrimental to their health. For example, Parliament has raised the age at which a young person can buy cigarettes; private vehicles carrying someone under 18 must now be smoke free; and we have introduced legislation to ban under-18s from buying e-cigarettes. As I suspect hon. Members know, the all-party parliamentary group on smoking and health recommended only last month that the age at which someone can buy cigarettes ought to be raised from 18 to 21.

The arguments are fundamentally about health and damage; I wonder whether there are hon. Members present who voted against such measures, because they have an argument to answer about consistency. We as a society determine that young people need that additional support and protection. If we consider them to be minors in that area, why do we not in another area?

A further health example is sunbeds, which have been mentioned. Another, which draws on the point about how we differ in parts of our country, is that the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 raised the minimum age for getting tongue and intimate piercings in Wales to 18. That is a recent way in which the age has gone upwards. A non-health example is that of buying fireworks, which has also been mentioned.

There is a serious consistency point. Someone is either old enough or they are not, and that is not only an idea that is based on health examples—there are plenty of other areas where Parliament has made the same judgment. It includes the right to take out credit, to be able to gamble, to sit on a jury, to own land or property and to legally sign a contract. We could also look at the way the criminal justice system works, where young people are treated differently, with different types of courts and institutions.

Let us move on to the two areas that require parental consent: marriage, other than in Scotland, and joining the armed forces. Those concepts have been discussed in today's debate. We have to be able to return to the central point of understanding whether someone is or is not old enough, and we should be honest on that point.

Cat Smith: Will the Minister give way?

Chloe Smith: I have to continue as I must allow time for the hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton to wrap up the debate.

The field of education and work is also relevant. At the age we are talking about, young people can choose to participate through full-time education, a job or volunteering combined with part-time study, or by undertaking further training—many young people choose to do so because it gives them good prospects. I think we would all argue that having people in education post 16 helps the economy and society more generally.

If we determine that it is good for individuals and for young people collectively, we have to address that question to ourselves when we talk about their voting choices.

That leads to the question of when people work and pay tax. Some people—I think the hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton mentioned it first in the debate—make the “no taxation without representation” argument. A minority of young people work—a small number—but not very many of them pay tax, in part at least because of the raising of the personal allowance. Those who earn least in our society, including our young people, will not be required to pay tax until they earn more.

I understand the argument that one could work and therefore one could pay tax and therefore one has an interest. It does not follow that the tax should be linked to the right to vote, especially if we turn the argument around. If we turn it from “no taxation without representation” to “no representation without taxation”, we would essentially be saying that those who are unable to work or the lowest earners in our society should not get the vote. That is the corollary of the argument, and it needs to be drawn out. If we want to make a link between tax and voting, we have to look at the opposite case as well. It is right that we should do so.

Parliament has determined time after time that we have such a thing as an age of majority, and we seek to protect people who are younger than that age. We have to confront that in today's discussion.

I move on to what else we should, must and do to improve citizenship education and expand the range of ways that young people can participate in our democracy. The Government absolutely recognise that point and have a record of action to prove it. We work in partnership with a range of civil society organisations, including the British Youth Council, to help young people be involved. The Government facilitate the UK Youth Parliament, and last year we saw the success of National Democracy Week. Of course, the national curriculum now rightly includes citizenship education.

I am so pleased that the hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton reminded us of Annie Kenney, because that allows us to look at what the Cabinet Office did for the suffrage centenary last year. It delivered a range of things to help young people get involved in our democracy. I urge hon. Members to look at the toolkit, the democracy ambassadors scheme and the school resources, which are there for us all to use in our constituencies. Those resources help us to do the practical work in a way that makes a difference, and help young people to be in their rightful place in our democracy, as part of what we should all be doing to promote and improve the way that we do politics. We do that by including young people, but also by being respectful of the arguments that go with that: what public opinion really says; what minority and majority really mean; what commitments such as those in manifestos actually mean to people; and how we can consider all of those things together in a way that means that everyone is welcome in our democracy, at the right age. That is as it should be, and it is a good thing.

10.55 am

Jim McMahon: I thank all hon. Members who have contributed to this important debate. It is more fundamental than extending the franchise; it is about our whole

democracy and the value of our politics. I find myself not only coming to the conclusion that our politics is broken—repairable, I hope, but broken—but wondering how broken our United Kingdom is, and how little voice English residents have. Scotland and Wales have taken the initiative, because they have devolved institutions that want to take the lead. In England, we are being held back by the UK Parliament, which will not even facilitate a debate on the Floor of the House to test the will of Parliament on this issue. That is the frustration.

We know that there are different views—we take a different view on some of the arguments that are deployed—but we have been denied the opportunity to test the will of Parliament and have a vote on the issue. For me, that is the most scandalous part of how our democracy works. We have seen the private Members' Bills process frustrated time after time. We have seen parliamentary gymnastics deployed to make sure that the Government do not have to face up to difficult decisions.

It is correct to say that the Conservative party manifesto is one that the Government seek to deliver, but let us be honest about the parliamentary gymnastics that were employed when the Overseas Electors Bill came to the Floor of the House as a private Member's Bill with the Government's support. They deliberately arranged for it to be talked out because they did not want to face a potential vote on votes at 16. Their own manifesto commitment was denied because they did not want to face a vote on this issue.

To be frank, some of the explanations that have been given on objections do not hold water. My son Jack, who is an apprentice, is old enough to pay tax on the income that he earns. He is affected by public transport when he goes to work, in the way that every other worker

on that bus is affected, and he contributes to his taxes for that. He is old enough to have taken driving lessons and before he is 18, he is very likely to be driving a car. Where the age line sits is not an argument that really holds water, for the same reasons that have been explained around consideration being given for some public health issues moving from 18 years to 21 years. It would not follow that the age of voting is then increased to 21—that is a nonsense.

I would respect the Government more if they really stated why their objections on this issue are so firm. It is not about the age of maturity. It is not about a common age across public health and protection issues. It is because they just do not believe that 16 and 17-year-olds will vote Conservative. It is as cruel as that. It is the same reason that we are seeing ID being introduced at polling stations, denying the right of people to cast a vote in some cases, when the evidence base is flimsy. We have seen that with individual voter registration, where people are deliberately pushed off the register. We see it through the stuffing of the House of Lords with people who are more likely to vote the Government's way—I accept that every Government does that, so it is not an entirely partisan point. We see it at every opportunity, including the proposal to reduce the number of MPs. Why? It is about gaming the system, rather than expanding our democracy.

I appreciate the debate that has taken place. I would like to have won the hearts and minds of the Government, but I have to accept that we are running out of time, and maybe it is a fight for another day.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered votes at 16.

Children's Social Care Services: Stoke-on-Trent

11 am

Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): I beg to move,

That this House has considered children's social care services in Stoke-on-Trent.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Howarth. It is not a pleasure to be having this debate. Children's services, and the role that councils play in protecting the most vulnerable children in our societies and communities, should be taken away from the party political arena. The Ofsted report that was received by Stoke-on-Trent City Council, showing the failures across the local authority area to help the most vulnerable people, is worthy of discussion with the Minister in order to work out how we can put that system back together. The report is one of the saddest things that I have had the displeasure of reading in my short time as a Member of Parliament.

We know that when it comes to engaging and working with young people, Stoke-on-Trent is now a city of two tales. The Minister will be acutely aware of the excellent work being done by Professor Liz Barnes and Carol Shanahan under the opportunity area, and I am sure he will agree that they are exemplars of good practice across the country, and of how people can achieve very impressive things when they get their act together. The flipside of that—the other side of the coin—is a children's services department that has now been rated “inadequate” in all four areas of the Ofsted report, which has highlighted some shocking outcomes that prompt the question whether the local authority is fit to continue running that service, and whether the individuals who are responsible for running it at cabinet level are fit to continue in public office.

I do not wish to draw too much on the politics of it, but I want to read out a few of the findings from the Ofsted report, which will set the context for what we are discussing this morning. It starts by saying:

“Children are not being protected...Vulnerable children are not safeguarded in Stoke-on-Trent...There are insufficient fostering placements to meet local need and many children are placed in unregulated placements. The local authority knows that some of these placements are unsafe.”

It states:

“Too many children come into care in a crisis or wait too long to be reunited with their families.”

It also says:

“As a result of poor leadership, management oversight and an absence of clearly evaluated performance information, services for children have seriously declined since the last full Ofsted inspection in 2015.”

That is a damning indictment of a children's services department, regardless of who is running the council. As a result of those shortcomings, young people are suffering in my constituency and across Stoke-on-Trent.

Ruth Smeeth (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab): I thank my hon. Friend for securing this important debate. The reality is that very few Ofsted reports—thankfully—are as bad as the one that has been written about Stoke-on-Trent City Council. However, I want to praise the individual social workers. It has been made clear that they are

working extraordinarily hard and achieving good things, but are not being well managed and are not being supported to deliver. Their casework involves over 25 cases. Does my hon. Friend agree that this shows that there has not been the appropriate management or political leadership focus on this area, and that they have abandoned the professionals, who are trying to do their best?

Gareth Snell: I could not have put it better myself. My hon. Friend has rightly pointed out that, as a local authority, Stoke-on-Trent has a level of casework that is higher than the national average. Each individual within that team is managing more cases than the British Association of Social Workers would deem acceptable for any authority, let alone one such as Stoke-on-Trent, where demand is higher than the national average.

The part of the report that I found most shocking stated:

“Support for vulnerable children, including those at risk from child sexual exploitation, going missing...private fostering and extremist ideologies”

was failing. The report basically says that young children in our city are at risk of being groomed for child sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation. I do a lot of work in this place on modern slavery, and I am appalled to know that not only is it happening in my city, but it is happening in my city because the one authority that is ultimately responsible for dealing with that has failed. I hope the Minister will pick up on that later, not because I want to kick about the council—we will do that in the forthcoming local elections—but because, fundamentally, something must change in Stoke-on-Trent so that we are no longer rated “inadequate” across the four areas when the Ofsted inspectors next come in, and so that I can look into the eyes of my constituents and say, “Yes, your children—if they ever end up in the care system—will be safe and looked after.” That is something that I cannot do currently.

Ruth Smeeth: Although my hon. Friend may not want to bash our councillors, it is important to make it clear that we did not have that rating when we were last inspected in 2015. In fact, we were rated “good”. As Ofsted has made clear, these services have seriously declined since the last full Ofsted inspection in 2015. The majority of recommendations made at that inspection, and at a focused visit in 2018, have not been actioned. It seems that the council has actively disengaged from the process and not followed the Government guidance in this area.

Gareth Snell: Again, my hon. Friend makes an excellent point; I agree wholeheartedly. The report makes it quite clear that there has been a marked decline in the provision of children's protective services in Stoke-on-Trent since 2015. That coincided with the last round of local elections, in which the City Independent group took control of the local authority. If we are being honest, its record of attendance at the corporate parenting panel demonstrates its disinterest in this area. Of the 16 meetings that one councillor could attend, she attended zero, and she is responsible for the funding of children's services across the council—eight apologies, and eight non-attendances.

We should make it clear—I will ask the Minister later on—whether there is anything that the Government think they can do to ensure that councillors that have

responsibility for these very important areas, including both adults' and children's social care, are compelled to attend those meetings, to further their understanding of what is going on. From councillors who have been on the corporate parenting panel, where they have heard from caseworkers who feel under pressure and stretched, I know that information was available at that time to the local authority members who make these decisions, had those members chosen to attend. The fact that they chose to attend none of those meetings shows the interest they have in that service. As a Parliament, we should talk collectively about how we can reinforce to people in decision-making roles their responsibilities.

I want to touch briefly on another comment in the report, which said:

"The response to children and young people who may be at increased risk due to contact with extremist ideology is not robust".

Stoke-on-Trent is a city in which we have had our problems with both the far right and organised Islamist terrorism, and we need to ensure that we protect our young people from both extremes. The report clearly states that young people are not being protected from extremism activity in a place where we know it is taking place. I do not understand how any local authority or councillor can stand up and defend the report in the way that Councillor Janine Bridges did by saying that things are much better under her watch than they have ever been.

The report sets out in black and white one of the starkest arrangements for protecting young people anywhere—not only in the west midlands, but in the country. I wonder whether the Minister could help me better understand at what point Government step in to start to resolve some of this directly. Frankly, I have no faith that the City Independent group that currently runs the council with Conservatives has either the political ability or the determination to resolve this, other than saying that everything is all right. That has been made quite clear in the leaflets that are being delivered around the city ahead of local elections, which say how wonderful children's services are. It beggars belief that there is this lack of connection between what is written in black and white by the authorities that are responsible for this, and what is written by the people who have taken decisions that led to this chronic failure in the first place.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): I thank the hon. Gentleman for bringing this very important debate to the House; it is vital that this issue gets debated. I understand that Stoke-on-Trent City Council is in quite close contact—particularly through the multi-agency safeguarding hub—with Staffordshire County Council and other excellent councils, such as Leeds. Has he seen a determined effort by the leadership to ensure that—even now—the deficiencies pointed out in the report are beginning to be addressed?

Gareth Snell: The hon. Gentleman points to the MASH system in Staffordshire County Council, which is one of the areas where Stoke-on-Trent City Council has made a rod for its own back. Across the border, in Staffordshire County Council—literally on the doorstep—is a system that is more robust and much better than the one that Stoke-on-Trent City Council operates. A lot of

the agencies that are involved in it, including the police and some of the third-party organisations, work with both authorities, so it is not as if it was not possible to tap into that system to see how it works.

The officers that my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Ruth Smeeth) North and I have spoken to understand the severity of the report and want to fix the problem. The officer corps desperately wants to resolve it, and the social workers we know are heartbroken. They have taken it personally, because it is young people entrusted to them who have been let down. However, I have not seen any element of acceptance from some parts of the political leadership that there is a problem that needs to be resolved. They took to the airwaves on the day the report was published to dismiss it and say that it was the Government's fault for not giving them enough money, local MPs' fault for not shouting about it previously, and in some cases the families' fault for having the audacity to find themselves in need of social care in the first place.

I do not have the sense that the cabinet member responsible and the leader of the council understand the gravity of the report that is in front of them. If I am being honest, I do not believe that they have any interest in resolving this problem, because this is not the sort of politics that they want to do. They are not interested in rolling up their sleeves and dealing with the difficult parts of civic life in Stoke-on-Trent. They like to do the fun, happy stuff, such as cutting ribbons in front of new car parks, filling potholes and having their pictures taken—but children's social care is the sort of stuff that matters to people on a day-to-day basis.

Jeremy Lefroy: The hon. Gentleman and I have joint concern for the city, which is important to the whole of Staffordshire, not just its residents. I understand that an improvement board has been set up to deal with the situation. What is his understanding of its work and its effectiveness so far?

Gareth Snell: There is an improvement board, but unfortunately, given the timing of the report and the purdah period for the local election cycle, no one will tell us what is going on with it, what actions it is taking and whether it is looking to Staffordshire County Council, which I hold up as an example—it is run by a good Conservative administration, which has taken responsibility for these issues and is dealing with them. This is not about Labour and Conservative party politics. There are perfect examples around the country of good Tory councils doing this well, and examples of Labour councils doing it well. This is an example of a council doing it badly, and the leadership refuse to accept that.

Ruth Smeeth: Does my hon. Friend agree not only that the council is doing it badly and has dismissed the report, but that it has failed to acknowledge the impact on families in our city and has not said sorry? Councillor Janine Bridges and Councillor Ann James have acted as if this has nothing to do with them, despite the fact that both of them have been responsible for delivery for the past four years. During that time our children, including homeless children, have not received the support that they are due under statutory provision. Homeless 16 and 17-year-olds do not always receive a timely or

[*Ruth Smeeth*]

thorough response to meet their needs. We have young people on the streets and a political leadership that will not even say sorry.

Gareth Snell: That sums up why there is so much frustration with this process. Our city has problems. None of the MPs who represent it, including me, my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton), who would have been here if he was not restricted by his Parliamentary Private Secretary role, would hide that fact. We saw the same when the Care Quality Commission did a system-wide review and found that older people were being left in their beds covered in urine for days because of a social care failing in Stoke-on-Trent City Council. Our frustration stems from the fact that, unless the problem is so stark and is written in black and white in a report that is so damaging that it requires a political intervention at this level, or is splashed in the headlines of our newspapers, nothing gets done and nothing gets changed. There is no remorse, no apology, and no sense that anything that the council was responsible for was its fault. It is always the fault of the Government, of everybody around them, and of the agencies not doing their bit. It is about time that people such as Councillor Bridges, Councillor James and their partners in the coalition took responsibility for the decisions that they have taken over the past four years, which have led us to this place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent North is right. We are highlighting some of the starkest parts of our society. It is a constant badge of shame for me that, when we highlight the awful parts of our society, they always manifest themselves in Stoke-on-Trent in a way that is even worse than they had to be. If we got the basics right—if we got the bread-and-butter politics right and had given a damn about the people we are there to serve—some of this would not have happened.

I am sure the Minister will say that every child service department is now stretched because there is increasing demand. He will say that it is a demand-led service, and the local authority has no immediate control over the demand. I accept that, but if we know the demand is there—if there is a constant reporting system that says, “There is a problem with this system”—and people choose not to act on it, choose not to attend corporate parenting panels, choose to divert funding to other departments, choose not to engage with the Local Government Association, choose not to participate in county-wide programmes, choose to defer the decisions that they should be making to officers, choose not to turn up to reports, and choose not to say sorry, that is a pattern of behaviour of failure. That is not a coincidence or a coalescing of misfortune; it is a pattern of behaviour that has led to systematic failure.

I sincerely hope that the work being done by officers, the social work team and the people who are coming into the local authority is effective. A commissioner has been appointed to establish whether this should stay with the local authority or whether it should become a trust. For what it is worth, even though it is an appallingly run service, I hope the Minister will take heed of what we suggest: we think it should stay with the local authority. We genuinely believe that, once the election is out of the way—whatever the outcome—there will be a

renewed appetite to fix this. I have always been a believer that local authorities should clear up their own messes. I appreciate that that is his decision, not mine, and the commissioner’s report will guide him. We have some responsibility for this. We will hold whichever political party is running the council responsible for fixing this, and we know that the Government will do so, too.

I ask the Minister to address these points. Where there are clear examples of councillors not engaging in their executive-level functions, what can we and the Government do to ensure that they take those responsibilities seriously? This is not just a matter of funding; there is clearly a cultural issue. What can the Government do to help change the culture in Stoke-on-Trent? If there is a plan, I will happily work with them to deliver it. Importantly, what does the Minister believe we can do to ensure that when Ofsted comes in next time, it does not give us a catalogue of failures that shows that young people in Stoke-on-Trent have been let down?

11.18 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Nadhim Zahawi): It is a pleasure to serve under your stewardship, Mr Howarth. I congratulate the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Gareth Snell) on securing this debate, and I commend the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Ruth Smeeth), my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton)—my PPS—and my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) for engaging with it.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North raised the important issue of social workers. We must not forget to thank the frontline workers. I went up to Doncaster after the turnaround there, and I met social workers on their own without directors in the room. I asked, “What happened? Seventy per cent. of you are the same people who were here when you were failing, and yet you are now ‘good’.” To a man and woman, they said to me, “It’s because we had strong leadership—political leadership and officer leadership—that believed in us. It was consistent, it was there for us and it supported us in what we were trying to do.” That is a strong message to take from that.

I commend the leadership in Staffordshire County Council—the political and officer leadership. The chief executive and the director of children’s services are both outstanding. I wholeheartedly agree that nothing is more important than the work that we do to ensure that vulnerable children are able to live safe and happy lives and achieve their potential wherever they live in our country. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North mentioned the 2015 Ofsted inspection. Sadly, Ofsted’s rating was “requires improvement” but services were in a much better place than they are today—the hon. Lady is absolutely right about that.

The inspection of local authority children’s services report states that there are demonstrable failings in protecting the most vulnerable children. The Government have always been crystal clear that it is the responsibility of the local authority to manage their service to ensure continuous improvement and proper protection of all children, but Stoke’s decline—all service areas are now deemed “inadequate”—since its last inspection in June 2015, which the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central

mentioned, is deeply concerning and highlights the urgent need for central Government intervention. It is important that we act quickly on improvement, so we are funding Leeds—an outstanding authority and one of our “partners in practice”—to provide immediate peer support to Stoke and help ensure that children there are safe.

In the light of the seriousness of that systemic failure and as the hon. Gentleman mentioned, the Department will also appoint a children's services commissioner to conduct on my behalf a three-month review of Stoke's capacity and capability. The commissioner will look at all evidence and views, and will report to me after three months on whether the council can improve in a reasonable timeframe—I take on board the hon. Gentleman's comments on that—or whether services are more likely to improve if run by another organisation, such as a children's services trust, to which he referred, or a better-performing local authority.

As I mentioned earlier, I saw at first hand in Doncaster how trusts have been effective in securing change in local authorities that have had some of the most serious failures. Doncaster is now rated “good”, having been a failing local authority for children's services. Birmingham and Slough are now no longer “inadequate” after years of failure. Local authority partnerships have also shown success. The Isle of Wight has improved from “inadequate” to “good” as a result of its partnership with Hampshire.

That is not to say, however, that local authorities cannot improve themselves when there is the commitment and the capability to do so—I think that is the point the hon. Gentleman sought to make in his outstanding remarks. I enjoyed visiting Bromley and Bexley earlier this year. Both have been the focus of Government intervention in recent years and are now deemed “good” and “outstanding” respectively. There was real commitment, from the political leadership to the officer class and all the way through, to deliver on that.

The Department has a good track record of working with local authorities to improve “inadequate” services. Since 2010, 44 local authorities have been lifted out of intervention and have not returned, the significance of which should not be underestimated. I am also keen to focus on preventing failure, which is why the Department has developed a new improvement programme over the past 18 months. Bringing local authorities together through regional improvement alliances, and identifying “good” and “outstanding” authorities to be our partners in practice, is helping to get ahead of failure, while supporting sector-led improvement. Since April 2017, the number of “inadequate” local authorities has been reduced by a third, from 30 to 20. We are on track to achieve our target of having less than 10% of local authorities deemed “inadequate” by 2022.

I recognise the importance of supporting performance improvement across all local authorities, so that more and more are providing “good” and “outstanding” services to children. The Department's innovation programme focuses on ensuring that families receive the right support at the right time by adopting and adapting the best new practices, and continue to do so with the advent of the new What Works centre. That initiative seeks better outcomes for children, young people and

families by helping practitioners and decision makers across the sector to inform their work with the best possible evidence.

Some promising signs are emerging from the innovation investment, such as an integrated edge-of-care service, “No Wrong Door” in North Yorkshire, which has delivered extraordinary results: 86% of young people in North Yorkshire stay out of care, with greater stability and improved educational and employment outcomes. The Department, with the Treasury, is committing £84 million over the next five years to build on learning from the examples in North Yorkshire, Leeds and Hertfordshire—the most promising innovation projects. The programme is called “strengthening families; protecting children”, and it aims to improve social work practice and decision making in up to 20 local authorities, and to support more children to stay safely at home with their families.

We will also continue to learn from What Works, and understand how we might further strengthen the quality of social work practice. The most valuable resource is our people—the workforce. The practice of staff locally, from the leadership of directors of children's services to the decision making of social workers, is all paramount to ensure that children get the right support at the right time. That is why we are undertaking a programme of reforms to ensure that a highly capable, highly skilled and highly confident workforce make good decisions about the best outcomes for children and their families.

I recognise that Stoke and other local authorities are delivering services in a challenging environment—there is no doubt about that; the hon. Gentleman was right to highlight it—and they have had to make difficult choices to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. At the autumn statement, the Chancellor announced an extra £410 million to address pressures on adults' and children's social care services.

The Department is also working closely with the sector to build the strongest evidence base for long-term children's services funding, as part of my pitch for the spending review. We are in dialogue with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to inform a review of relative needs and resources, which the hon. Gentleman mentioned. That will make sure that the money gets to where it is needed most after future Government funding settlements.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising this important issue. I mention for the record the fantastic work that he and the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North do to champion the opportunity area programme. With people of such passion, commitment and quality, we can turn children's services around in the local authority. I am pleased to hear that we share the ambition to ensure that the most vulnerable children in Stoke have the safety and stability that they need to achieve their potential. I hope that I have provided reassurance of this Government's commitment to taking urgent action to support Stoke-on-Trent in its journey to improve children's services, so that all children are well protected and cared for and their social workers are supported to practise safely.

Question put and agreed to.

11.28 am

Sitting suspended.

Infant First Aid Training for Parents

[MR PHILIP HOLLOBONE *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair): Although the title of this afternoon's debate is "Infant First Aid Training for Parents", there is some debate about whether it should not be "parental first aid training for infants." No doubt, all will be revealed. I call Sarah Newton.

Sarah Newton (Truro and Falmouth) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered infant first aid training for parents.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. You make a good point—I was never an excellent scholar, and I am sure my English can be improved upon. In the course of the debate, I hope to provide a good explanation of what I was seeking to achieve in securing it.

I would like to begin with Rowena's story. Rowena had been shopping in a department store with her mother and her five-month-old daughter. They had stopped for coffee in the children's section, where there were lots of mothers with their babies. Seated near their table was a mother feeding her nine-month-old baby girl some home-made food. Given that they both had little baby girls, they exchanged compliments on the girls and continued with their business.

Leaving her daughter with her mother, Rowena went off to buy some coffees. While in the queue, she heard screaming and a terrible commotion. Looking around, she realised it involved the mother she had just met. Rowena could see that something was wrong with the little girl, who was not moving and was very quiet. Instinctively, she left the queue and ran to the back of the café to see what she could do.

When Rowena arrived back at the table, she saw that two other customers had come to the mother's aid. They were trying to calm the mother down while furiously patting the back of the baby girl. Rowena quickly realised that the baby was choking on the baby food that she had been fed. Fortunately, Rowena knew what to do. She told the women attempting to help to stop and that she had first aid training, and she took the baby. Because she had completed a baby first aid course, she felt confident enough to help.

Rowena sat on a chair and held the baby face down along the length of her left leg, with the head lower than the knee. She started to give her back blows, hitting her firmly between the shoulder blades. After Rowena delivered the second or third back blow, the baby girl started to cry, so Rowena realised that she could breathe and that the blockage in her throat had gone. She handed the girl to her mum and reassured both of them that everything was okay.

The mother was quite shocked and upset, and so was Rowena. She realised the significance of her intervention. She said:

"I didn't fully realise until that point what had just happened and the gravity of it".

She said it had a big impact on her. That day, Rowena had done something remarkable, yet so very simple.

With a few simple actions, she had saved that baby's life. I want to enable every new parent or carer to receive high-quality training.

Andrea Jenkyns (Morley and Outwood) (Con): I commend my hon. Friend on bringing this debate to the Chamber. I had first aid training with the Red Cross over a decade ago, as did my father. My dad put it to use when my mum had a mini-stroke, and my mum ended up using it on my dad when he was dying. I am a mother of a two-year-old little boy, Clifford. I am sure most parents would agree that the most precious thing in any parent's life is their children. My hon. Friend has prompted me to go and be retrained, especially now that I have my little one. If we can, cross-party, encourage as many parents as possible to do that, that will be a win-win for us and for parents across the country.

Sarah Newton: I very much welcome my hon. Friend's intervention as a young mum. Rowena had her first aid training through the Red Cross, which can provide my hon. Friend with specialist training for babies and children. Administering first aid to a young child is quite different from administering it to an older person. I commend my hon. Friend, and I hope that, as a result of our work today, many more parents will do the same.

John Howell (Henley) (Con): This is an excellent debate. The scale of the task we face is quite enormous. A survey published in *The Daily Telegraph* not so long ago showed that only 24% of parents thought they had the skills to be able to stop their child choking. That is a very small percentage. What can we do to encourage a vast number of parents to get the training?

Sarah Newton: My hon. Friend makes an extremely good point. I am blessed to say that I have three children, who are in their twenties; I remember how many times I was worried about them and went to my GP or to A&E unnecessarily. I wish I had done the training, because I would have felt much more confident as a parent—I certainly would have saved some valuable time in A&E and with doctors.

I was prompted to secure this debate to continue the work I have done to prevent avoidable deaths from sepsis. We have made huge progress, and the Government have done excellent work with the UK Sepsis Trust to make sure that parents are aware of the symptoms of sepsis, as are our healthcare professionals, from paramedics right the way through to people in hospitals, and professionals in nursery schools and primary schools. They are all having sepsis training. That is important, and now is the time to build on that and to empower parents to spot the signs of not only sepsis but all other serious illnesses.

Mary Robinson (Cheadle) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend for securing this important debate and for sharing Rowena's story. We all know that story could have turned out very differently. My constituents Joanne and Dan Thompson set up Millie's Trust after their daughter Millie tragically passed away in a choking incident in October 2012. The trust provides paediatric courses for nurseries, emergency first aid courses for workplaces and first aid courses for families, including for young children between the ages of eight and 16—that may answer your earlier question, Mr Hollobone. Does my

hon. Friend join me in recognising the wonderful work of Millie's Trust and charities like it, which offer courses not only to give confidence and reassurance to professionals and parents, but to ensure a good grounding in first aid, potentially giving life-saving information to people in situations such as Rowena's?

Sarah Newton: Rowena's story might not have ended so well without the wonderful work of Millie's Trust and all the other organisations that ensure that people have the training to empower them to take the right action at the right time.

That brings me neatly to the statistics from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, which suggest that 21% of child deaths involve a modifiable factor—something that could have been done to prevent that death. That is quite a significant number of lives that could have been saved if the appropriate action had been taken.

Emma Little Pengelly (Belfast South) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing this important debate. The statistics that she outlines demonstrate how important first aid training could be—it could genuinely save lives. Given the number of agencies and organisations that young parents engage with, from schools and nurseries to GP practices, is there not a good opportunity to signpost the availability of existing courses to parents and raise their awareness of them? In my area, they are available through St John Ambulance and the Red Cross. That would encourage take-up. If parents heard the statistics, very many more would take up the opportunity.

Sarah Newton: The hon. Lady makes a very good point. I hope that in our small way—as a result of this debate, the people watching it from outside the Chamber and the media coverage we secure—we will encourage people to take up that opportunity. That is a really good idea.

I have been listening very much to healthcare professionals in my constituency. Dr Simon Robertson, a consultant paediatrician at the Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust, told me:

“I have been a consultant general paediatrician for the last 12 years. I see children referred into hospital from their GPs, and the emergency department.

From the view of a general paediatrician a child illness and resuscitation course for all parents makes practical sense for the families and NHS services.

Parents are expected to make important decisions about their children's health and about seeking medical advice. But we know they find it difficult to work out if their child just has a minor viral illness, or something more serious. Unfortunately not all parents are educationally equipped to read instructions from their red book, NHS Choices or health advice apps like the 'HandiApp'. For them, we know they really need time and practice in a supportive environment to learn these decision making skills. We repeatedly see this in the families we teach resuscitation to on the wards.

What is needed in my opinion, is a course for all parents and those in child care on how to manage the common emergency problems like choking, diarrhoea and vomiting, a seizure, recognising sepsis, managing a head injury, or in preventing accidents, drowning or cot death. These learnt skills could help keep children safe and healthy, so should be the skills highly valued by families. Vitally, early action may help prevent some medical emergencies deteriorating to life threatening illness.

This can only be good for the health of children, and for children's acute NHS services.”

I completely agree.

In 2013, the Department for Education undertook a confidential inquiry into maternal and child health in England. It conducted a meticulous audit of deaths of babies and children, and reported identifiable failures in children's direct care in just over a quarter of deaths, and potentially avoidable factors in a further 43% of deaths. The University of Northampton's 2017 report “Before Arrival at Hospital: Factors affecting timing of admission to hospital for children with serious infectious illness” stated that parents often find it difficult to access relevant health information or to interpret symptoms, and that it can even be difficult for GPs to determine how serious a case is in the early stages.

I have been working with Cornwall Resus, which was established in 2012 by two paediatric nurses to give parents and carers the necessary skills to empower them to recognise when their baby or child is unwell and to respond appropriately. It runs courses for parents in community centres around Cornwall. Those courses last two to two and a half hours and include practical training on choking and resuscitation using lifelike dummies, with lots of time for questions and discussion at the end. I know that I would not be happy to undertake those actions unless I had practised them on a dummy first; having just looked at instructions or a diagram, I would still be very nervous about the amount of pressure to apply, so using dummies and having practical sessions and reassurance is really important.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the hon. Lady for bringing this subject forward for consideration, and I commend her for the work she did as a Minister. I am very pleased to see her active on the Back Benches with the rest of us. I became a grandfather for the third time just before Christmas, when my grandson Austin—I already had two granddaughters—was born. I am very mindful that parents are immensely stressed after the birth of their baby, given the care babies require. For each parent to have just a bit of knowledge about these things at that time can be the difference between life and death. Does the hon. Lady agree that there is an opportunity, through the antenatal classes that mothers do with their local trust and GP, to instil in parents the basic skills she refers to?

Sarah Newton: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his contribution. I will come on to what I would like the Government to consider doing. I do not think we should be prescriptive about how this training is enabled. Lots of organisations provide such training—Kernow Resus is one such organisation, but we have also heard about the Red Cross, St John Ambulance and Millie's Trust—and of course there is the NHS workforce themselves: maternity nurses, and healthcare professionals who visit families at home. We should not be at all prescriptive about how we might enable this training, but it is important that all parents have the opportunity to participate.

Most courses cost around £30, which will seem to most of us like a very modest investment, but not every parent will be able to afford that. That will be a real barrier for some families. That is why I would like the Government to enable universal access to high-quality,

[Sarah Newton]

evidence-based training delivered by fully qualified providers. That would give us the opportunity to reduce morbidity and mortality and, importantly, family distress. It would also help tackle the associated costs of treatment, hospital admissions and even possible litigation. We have seen huge improvements in child and infant health in our country. The number of deaths of babies and small children has fallen significantly, but it is still far too high, so I really hope that the Minister will consider seriously how we might take forward this relatively modest, straightforward intervention.

The NHS is rightly focused on preventing ill health and injury, and I am delighted that the Government are investing so much in it. I am sure everybody in the Chamber is fully supportive of that investment. It would require only modest investment to pilot this training in a couple of geographical areas and work with a couple of local commissioning groups to see how they might go about delivering it. We have heard about a range of options they might pursue. By giving commissioning groups responsibility to see how they might go about that, we could collect proper evidence about not only the impact on families and the reduction of deaths and harm to children, but the impact on acute trusts and primary care in an area if, as a result of being more confident, parents do not engage with the NHS quite so much.

This would be a small but vital step. It would be such a positive contribution. We would have more Rowenas, and far fewer families would have to cope with the dreadful grief of losing a loved one.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair): Order. The debate can last until 4 o'clock. I am obliged to begin calling the Front Benchers no later than 3.27 pm. The guideline limits are 10 minutes for the SNP, 10 minutes for Her Majesty's Opposition and 10 minutes for the Minister, and then Sarah Newton will have three minutes at the end to sum up the debate. Until 3.27 pm, it is Back-Bench time. Two Members have indicated that they would like to speak. I call Douglas Ross.

2.47 pm

Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con): Thank you, Mr Hollobone. It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship. I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and Falmouth (Sarah Newton) for securing this important debate, and for the various points that she raised. The way she delivered her remarks shows that the care and compassion she displayed as a Minister continues on the Back Benches. We heard from the interventions of several hon. Members how important this issue is for many people.

I approach the debate as the father of a 22-day-old; young Alastair was born three weeks ago yesterday. That is where my interest in this issue comes from. I am now mentioning my son and my wife quite a lot in the Chamber; it seems my soft side is coming out. To compensate, I remind people that when I was first elected, a magazine did a profile of all the Scottish Conservatives who had been elected, in which I was described as "tough as teak". I have a tough side and a

soft side, which I hope to balance in the debate. I was keen to take part in it for personal reasons, but also to explain some of the issues that my constituents face. While I was shocked and disappointed by the Red Cross figures that showed that just 5% of adults had the skills and confidence to provide emergency first aid to infants, I had to accept and admit that I was among the 95% who do not have those skills and have not gone through that training. I probably should have. In the nine months ahead of Alastair's birth, I thought we had prepared for everything. We bought nursery equipment and new clothes, and even went down to the detail of how we would introduce our child to our dog. Those are all things we thought about, and it was only when this debate appeared on the Order Paper that I thought we had done nothing about preparing ourselves for this new human being coming into our lives and how we would care for him and look after him if, in the unfortunate situation described by some hon. Members, he required emergency first aid.

One of the great benefits we got ahead of my wife giving birth was the care, understanding and education of our antenatal classes. They were excellent. At Dr Gray's and throughout Moray we have excellent midwives. We went along to Moray College on two Thursdays to attend the classes, which really prepared us both, giving us all the knowledge and information we needed for the birth and the first few days. I now wonder why we do not introduce an element of first aid training into those antenatal classes. There is a captive audience of parents wanting to know more about the first stages in their child's life and the birth process, and they could be told how to provide emergency treatment for an infant if they require it once they are home.

Emma Little Pengelly: I endorse what the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) have said about using antenatal classes. The parents are there and they want to learn, so that is a good opportunity. Does he agree that there are alternative opportunities, such as through Sure Start, to target families to support them on looking after their child? There is that opportunity after the child's birth to give parents those necessary skills to save lives.

Douglas Ross: I fully endorse what the hon. Lady said. If there is not time or there are other constraints that mean a first aid element cannot be included in an antenatal class, perhaps there should be a signpost saying, "This is something you can consider. Here are some of the organisations who could do this," just to put it on people's radar. They are very excited about the birth of their child and fascinated by the birth process, which they have gone along to learn about, so just mentioning that may be a trigger that would make some parents consider, "Actually it is important to go to that organisation, or another, to get that training."

Jim Shannon: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on the birth of his son, which I would have done anyway. Will he be a footballer or a referee—who knows?

There is another option: the health visitor calls to check on the child and the mother, and there is a follow-up after birth. There are many ways other than statutory ways of doing this.

Douglas Ross: Absolutely. One of the texts I was reading before I came to the debate was from my wife, who had had her weekly meeting with the health visitor this afternoon. That is something we can look at, and at the end of my remarks I will explain what I think we could do in Scotland and for other new parents in Moray.

Having not had the option or opportunity to do that training in antenatal classes, we looked at what first aid training was available in Moray for people with infants. During my research for this debate, I was notified that there were no classes at all in the Moray constituency; parents must travel to Aberdeen—a 70-mile journey each way. As I think my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and Falmouth said, the classes cost about £40, which is not much for some but prohibitive for others. Those classes cost roughly £40 to £50 in Aberdeen, 70 miles away, or in Dundee, 150 miles away. I mentioned in a previous Westminster Hall debate the downgrading of our maternity services in Moray—I am fighting against that—and surely we must ensure that first aid classes for people with infants are available in a constituency the size of Moray, because we want to attract people to come here and set up their families. We must have everything possible available to them.

Since I did not take these classes, I looked at some of the things I could learn at them. My hon. Friend the Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Dr Johnson), who will follow me, will give far more information, given her medical background; I look forward to listening to her. However, for example, I was fascinated to learn that, to treat a burn on an infant, the burn area must be put under cold water for 10 minutes and then covered with cling film. I think I could do the cling film bit, but keeping my 22-day-old baby under a cold water tap for 10 minutes would be challenging, given how difficult we have found bathtimes. I also noted that the best cure for any bumps was putting what we in Scotland call a cloot—frozen peas in a towel—on the bump. I therefore learnt a bit in preparation for the debate, which I hope provides reassurance that things are progressing.

Many more new parents would feel confident and more comfortable in the knowledge gained from such classes. It is not simply about not knowing but about a lack of confidence, as my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and Falmouth said. We can have how we would do something in the back of our mind—we may have seen something we could try on television—but having the confidence that results from practising on dummies, as she mentioned, before having to take that step is important. Of course, we all hope we will never have to use that know-how.

I commend the Government's proposal for health education to become compulsory in primary and secondary schools from September, requiring schools to teach first aid and life-saving skills. That is important because by the time a pupil leaves school they will have all the skills we are mentioning today, having been taught to administer cardiopulmonary resuscitation as well as learning the purpose of a defibrillator and basic treatment for common injuries. In Scotland, I really back the "Save a life Scotland" strategy, which aims to equip 500,000 people in Scotland with CPR skills by 2020—that work to be done in primary and secondary schools with partner organisations the Scottish Ambulance Service, the Red Cross, Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland and many others.

St John Ambulance states that when a child stops breathing, only one in four parents know what to do. When 82% of people feel it important to know first aid and 80% are interested in first aid, surely this is as good a time as any to include first aid training in a number of elements, whether antenatal classes or our national curriculum, so that people who lack knowledge and confidence have that built up, so that they know they are not doing something wrong if faced with a situation where they need to perform first aid.

One of the best sources of information for the debate was the "save a life" survey carried out by *Mother and Baby* magazine, which we have become regular subscribers to. It found that 62% of parents said that knowing first aid skills would make them feel more prepared for parenthood and 57% said they would leave an injured child until an ambulance arrived, which is wrong. If we learn basic first aid skills, we can assist a child in those cases. It also found that 55% of parents said they lacked the skills necessary to save their child in the event of a life-threatening accident and 72% of parents would not know how to assist an unconscious child with CPR, or even deal with burns or scalds. Only 19% of parents interviewed—less than one in five—had been on a first aid course in the previous five years. We should change that, and thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and Falmouth having secured this debate, we can go forward on that.

In a number of years of marriage, I have found it is best to leave the final word to my wife. When I told her that I was to speak in this debate and what I was to say on training for new parents about infants, she said, "You don't want to have to do it, but having the knowledge is reassuring." That is how we should go forward. We should ensure that my wife, and all parents in Moray, in Scotland and across the UK, have that knowledge to save a child's life if required, even if we never want them to have to use it.

2.58 pm

Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and Falmouth (Sarah Newton) on securing this important debate. She has been a champion of raising awareness to reduce avoidable deaths through working with the UK Sepsis Trust—sepsis is also a major killer of adults and children—and I am delighted that she has now lent her voice to the cause of infant first aid training for parents. As a paediatric consultant, this is an issue close to my heart.

My hon. Friend highlighted the alarmingly high number of cases where something could have been done to prevent a child's death: 21% according to the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. I should declare my membership of that organisation. Working on a children's ward for the last 15 years, sadly I have seen far too many of those 21%. However, I have also seen children whose lives were saved by passing members of the public, as was described earlier in the case of Rowena, by doctors or health professionals, or by visiting family members who just happened to spot something and were able to help.

My hon. Friend the Member for Truro and Falmouth powerfully described a case of a child choking. As we approach Easter and then summer, mini-eggs and grapes

[Dr Caroline Johnson]

are particular culprits. Advice should include how to manage a choking child, as well as simple measures to prevent choking. Chopping up grapes into little pieces, sitting down while eating and not running about with things in the mouth are helpful in preventing choking, but it can still happen to anybody, young or old, at any time. We should all know some of the manoeuvres that can help, such as the one my hon. Friend described in the case of the baby choking. The baby should be held face down across the adult's legs, so that the baby's head is lower than the adult's knee, and blows should be applied to the baby's back, between the shoulder blades.

That sort of information does not take long to learn, but can have a huge impact and can be responsible for saving somebody's life. The information is already provided to a number of parents. I have delivered infant first aid to parents whose children have been in hospital. Each of the neonatal units that I worked on in the midlands provided first aid training to parents before they left hospital, in part because pre-term babies are more vulnerable when they have just left hospital and in part to provide parents with the confidence to manage very small babies when they go home, as was described by my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Douglas Ross). Training is also provided routinely to parents who have had a child die in the past, but obviously we want to look at prevention.

The hon. Member for Belfast South (Emma Little Pengelly) talked about contact with health visitors and midwives. Evidence shows that parents are particularly receptive to messages about healthcare and first aid when they have just had their baby or when they are expecting their baby, as my hon. Friend the Member for Moray mentioned. That is a time before life becomes really busy, when one can reflect on the joy that is to come and be well prepared for it.

There are lots of opportunities for first aid training to be provided. There are antenatal classes, where training can be signposted or provided, as well as nurseries. I strongly believe that the practical advice should not just include what to do when things have gone wrong, but how to stop them going wrong in the first place. My hon. Friend the Member for Moray mentioned burns. I remember the case of a child who walked past a lit candle; it caught her dress and she got severe burns to her whole front. In that case her mum knew what to do—drop her to the floor, roll her over and stop the burning—and treated the situation appropriately, but even so the injury was severe and could have been prevented if the candle had not been left on such a low table.

Using seatbelts and car seats are among other simple measures that we know we should do. One major cause of preventable deaths in children is drowning, so there should be simple advice about making sure that children are not left unsupervised around open water. I have seen this particularly in situations where there has been open water and a group of people, often at a big family event, where everybody is looking after the child but there is not one specific person watching to see that they do not end up in the water. At one of my children's christenings, I was upstairs in a bedroom on the other side of the house when I saw from the window that a friend's little boy had gone towards the small pond we

had in the garden and that he was on his own. I ran downstairs and was fortunate that he had not gone into the pond by the time I got there. My husband was out with a digger the following day getting rid of the pond. It was not worth the risk, but if people have such ponds they need to be carefully managed. I have certainly seen children drown in those situations.

Jim Shannon: One thing that can be neglected in homes is fluids in cupboards. Years ago, when we were younger, fluids were kept in lemonade bottles and similar containers, and children did not realise that. I well remember when my second boy was very young—he was the one who everything seemed to happen to—he managed to get a gulp or two of Brasso. He had the shiniest backside that any child ever had, but that is by the way. It can easily happen that a fluid can be drunk or absorbed by a youngster. We need to take steps in our own homes to ensure that all fluids are under lock and key, wherever they may be.

Dr Johnson: I take the hon. Gentleman's point about fluids. I noticed when I bought some washing detergent last week that the lids now have a clasp that is especially difficult to open, so children cannot consume those little bubbles. No one is ever perfect; I know that if I looked for hazards to my three children in my own home they would be there. So far, thank God, I have been lucky and I hope that will continue, but we can all do things to reduce risk.

I am glad that the Government are committed to ensuring that all early learning staff have first aid training, but it is time that they did the same for parents. Since 2016, all newly qualified level 2 and 3 early years staff must hold a current paediatric first aid or emergency paediatric first aid certificate. The Millie's Mark quality scheme, which was commended by my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mary Robinson), was also launched in 2016. It requires childcare providers to train 100% of their staff in paediatric first aid, not just to have one trained person on site at any one time. The 300th nursery gained Millie's Mark last summer, which was a cause for celebration, and I am proud those nurseries include Dappledown House Nursery and Appletree Corner Daycare in my constituency. My son's nursery has offered parents first aid training in the last couple of months, so the message is getting out there and that needs to continue.

The efforts to provide safety in schools should now be matched to provide safety in the home. The time and financial investment needed to provide that is small. It costs £30 for two and a half hours of invaluable training on some of the most common causes of avoidable death, including choking, and ways of providing resuscitation. Providing preventive medicine is one of the best investments we can make. As well as avoiding tragedy, it takes pressure off our NHS services, which are facing ever-increasing demand. It is the right thing to do for both our children and our country, and I am glad to lend my support to this cause today.

3.7 pm

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) is telling me that I will get endless amounts of time, but I will not indulge the House and will try to be relatively brief.

It is, as always, an immense pleasure to serve under your chairmanship and to see you here today, Mr Hollobone. Can I, as others have done, congratulate the hon. Member for Truro and Falmouth (Sarah Newton) on securing the debate? I always thought she was a conscientious Minister. I was annoyed that the week she resigned I had had a productive meeting with her about taking forward some changes to regulations. I hope the Government will appoint a new Minister soon and that we can follow that up. In one respect it is sad that she has left Government, but, as Members have said, it is good to see her on the Back Benches pursuing this issue. We wish her well, not just for this campaign but for her future time here.

In opening the debate, the hon. Lady spoke movingly about the story of Rowena. There was something incredibly encouraging and powerful about the story, which leads us to think about how many of us have received infant first aid training. It certainly gave a lot of us food for thought. Her asks of the Government are modest. She is not asking for billions of pounds of spending—perhaps if her colleagues from the DUP did it, they might have more success—but in all seriousness, she is looking for a modest change. I hope that the Minister is taking note and will take that back to the Department.

The hon. Lady was right to highlight the fact that it is great that organisations such as St John Ambulance and the Red Cross offer training on a commercial basis—they are charities and they have to cover their costs—but it is a bit sad that people have been asked to pay £30 or £40. As the hon. Member for Moray (Douglas Ross) highlighted, it is not just the cost of the courses that must be considered; if people travel to Edinburgh, Dundee or Aberdeen there are travel costs as well, which will be more than £40. He was right to put that on the record.

When we discuss the health service, I try to focus on the preventive spending agenda. As the hon. Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Dr Johnson) said, this idea backs up preventive spending. If we empower parents and give them first aid training, it means that fewer people will present at accident and emergency at hospitals, and that can only be a good thing further down the line. There is a safety aspect to the argument, but also an economic aspect. The hon. Lady was right to put that on the record.

We had interventions from the hon. Members for Morley and Outwood (Andrea Jenkyns), for Henley (John Howell), for Cheadle (Mary Robinson), for Belfast South (Emma Little Pngelly) and for Strangford. We also had two excellent contributions from the hon. Members for Moray and for Sleaford and North Hykeham. As we know, the hon. Member for Moray has become a dad recently and has joined the club of dads who are also MPs. I know that he will be having sleepless nights at the moment. I sometimes tell my wife that I come to Westminster for a rest and a good night's sleep. I am sure he is doing that as well.

A new parent spends so much time preparing for the arrival of a child, whether it is painting the nursery or getting the pram, but we miss out something as basic as first aid for infants. We now have two children, one of three and one of six months. Jessica was born in September. I had moved into a new house and was bolting drawers and wardrobes to the wall. As I was listening to this debate, I thought about how I spent so much time

thinking about how to bolt IKEA furniture to the wall and yet I have done no first aid training, which is absolutely bonkers.

The hon. Member for Moray is right to say that there is a tremendous opportunity at antenatal classes. I know that the hon. Member for Truro and Falmouth does not want to be too prescriptive, but it is certainly something that we should look at in Scotland, and I would be happy to work with the hon. Gentleman on making representations to NHS Scotland. He was right to put on the record the case of Dr Gray's in Moray. Every time I have spoken in these debates and mentioned it, I get in trouble for not trumpeting the Scottish Government line on it, but as a constituency MP he is absolutely right to put it on the record. He is a powerful champion for his constituents and it is good that that is on the record again.

The hon. Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham spoke with her professional expertise as a paediatric consultant. I have the great pleasure of chairing the all-party group on premature and sick babies—something that I will talk about later. As for paediatric consultants and neonatal staff, certainly in my experience of two occasions, we see those guys as gods when we are on the neonatal units, so it is really encouraging to have the hon. Lady in the House using her professional expertise in this debate. She was right to put on the record some of the public health messages that we as politicians can get out to our constituents, whether it is about cutting up grapes or highlighting the dangers that come up around Easter with mini-eggs.

One of the reasons I was asked by my party to sum up the debate is because I have a personal interest in the subject. I have two children, both of whom were born prematurely. On both occasions, there was a stay in the neonatal intensive care unit. We had two similar but slightly different experiences, the second of which was in September when my daughter was born and spent almost a month in hospital. She came home on oxygen and is still on oxygen at six months old. She gets it 24 hours a day. Before leaving the hospital, we were given an excellent document from the charity, Bliss, "Going home on oxygen". Before we got that document, we had done the car seat test. For my daughter to leave hospital, she had to be able to be in a car seat for an hour to make sure she did not stop breathing. The last thing that we did before taking my daughter home was to practise CPR on a dummy, which is an incredibly stark experience. On the one hand, you are there as a dad getting to take your daughter home. You have been on the neonatal unit and have put all of your trust in the staff, but you have to go home. As I was preparing for this debate, it struck me that it is good to provide CPR training and to practise on a dummy, but even now we are not yet at the stage where we have had the full infant first aid training course.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Truro and Falmouth on securing this debate and moving the issue up the agenda. There is much that we can do, even if it is simple things such as making sure we use our voices as politicians to encourage training. Her asks are very modest and she certainly has our support to further the agenda.

3.14 pm

Julie Cooper (Burnley) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. I congratulate the hon. Member for Truro and Falmouth (Sarah Newton)

[Julie Cooper]

on securing this important debate. The subject has had a lot of attention in the news recently, but not much attention in this place. Having listened to the speeches and talked to colleagues across the House, I do not think there will be much disagreement here today. The fact that there are not many Members here says more about the subject than it does about any other business in this House, important as it is: any Member seeing the title of this debate might say, “It’s a no-brainer. What is there to talk about? Of course it is something we support.” It is important to put these things on the record.

Members have talked about their personal experiences as parents and grandparents—I am sure we all want to congratulate the hon. Member for Moray (Douglas Ross) on the new addition to his family. People have spoken movingly about their own children and grandchildren. As a parent and a grandparent—I am going to be a grandparent again next week—I am reminded of how important the subject is, and we ought to give proper consideration to it. This debate gives us that opportunity, so I am grateful to the hon. Lady for securing it.

John Howell: As the hon. Lady rightly says, a lot of people have spoken from personal experience, but we as MPs have a role far beyond that—we are champions in our own constituencies. Does she not think that we should take the lessons learned and go out and make these points very forcefully in our constituencies?

Julie Cooper: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that important intervention. I shall certainly speak with a loud voice about the subject in my constituency, and I encourage all Members to do the same.

The other point made by the hon. Member for Moray was that access is not easy. In preparation for this debate I checked up on access to training courses for my constituents and found that, even though I represent an urban community, it involves a 60-mile drive or a long train journey on a slow, rickety train line. That presents a massive barrier to my constituents accessing such training. I totally take the point that the hon. Gentleman makes, and I agree with him entirely.

The safety of our children is and always should be paramount, and it is therefore important that, in the event of an obvious health emergency, parents have at least a basic knowledge of first aid so that they can take action before professional help arrives—actions that might save the child’s life. The hon. Member for Truro and Falmouth made a strong point about how it is important that parents are trained to recognise the symptoms of what can be serious diseases, such as sepsis and meningitis. It would be useful if parents were equipped to recognise the symptoms before they decide whether to call 999 or take their child to hospital, because knowing how to spot the symptoms really does save lives.

First aid, as the term suggests, is the first medical attention that a person receives after an accident or during a medical emergency. Despite what many people have been led to believe, first aid does not have to be delivered by medical professionals—we have established that. A person’s chances of surviving a medical emergency are increased dramatically if a member of the community

can respond with first aid immediately. What happens in the crucial minutes after someone dials 999 or the NHS’s 111 and before professional help arrives can be the difference between life and death. The British Red Cross reported that close to a quarter of infant deaths could have been prevented had there been a qualified first aider on hand, and who better to be trained than the parent?

Dr Caroline Johnson: A few weeks ago I was walking to a parliamentary event across the square, and I came across a man who was unconscious and not very well. When I called 999 for an ambulance, I noticed that the ambulance operators who answer the phone provide detailed and step-by-step advice to callers about what to do. That is a beneficial thing to note.

Julie Cooper: That is an important point. I have been on the receiving end of that with a family member, waiting for an ambulance and listening to instructions. Nevertheless, I appreciate that having the confidence to follow those instructions, particularly with a young child, might go a little beyond that.

This is about re-teaching people about what they think they know. There is a lot of so-called knowledge out there among people who think they know first aid, but that is often based on what they have seen in the media, which sometimes puts style before substance. In fact, procedures shown for dramatic effect often bear little resemblance to safe first aid. Furthermore, carrying out procedures without proper training might do more harm than good. First aid for babies is also vastly different from first aid for adults and other young children. Such important matters should be regarded as key parenting skills.

All parents, irrespective of their ability to pay, should have access to high-quality first aid training as a priority. Access to first aid training is about more than skills; it is also about building confidence and resilience. The British Red Cross surveyed a group of people it had trained in first aid, and asked whether they felt the training had contributed to their personal wellbeing. Three quarters of the respondents said it had made them more capable and more reliable in an emergency, and half said it had made them more determined and better at finding their way out of difficult situations.

Ahead of this debate, the British Red Cross shared with me the case of Leanne, a young mum from Swindon. When her baby, Maia, was six months old, Leanne took a baby first aid course with the British Red Cross. When Maia was 18 months old, she had a febrile seizure. Using knowledge from her first aid course, Leanne was able to save Maia’s life by instantly recognising the signs, taking steps to cool her down by removing her blanket, and placing her on the floor so that she did not injure herself during the seizure. After the seizure was over, Leanne further reduced Maia’s temperature by stripping her down to her vest, and she placed her in the infant recovery position. Leanne’s quick thinking saved Maia’s life before the paramedics arrived, and Maia is back to her playful, happy self. Leanne was able to do that only because she recognised the signs of a febrile seizure from her baby and child first aid course.

A seizure can be a terrifying and violent event for a parent to witness, especially when they do not understand what is happening. Febrile seizures are not unusual in

babies and children between the ages of six months and three years. However, the Red Cross reports that, when questioned, 66% of parents had not been taught to recognise a febrile seizure, and 65% did not even know what one was. The baby and first aid course gave Leanne the knowledge and skills to act, but most importantly it also gave her the confidence. She said:

"I'm grateful that I had attended a baby and child first aid course which meant I knew what to look out for and how to deal with a febrile seizure."

Because of her first aid knowledge, she felt calm and able to act for her daughter.

We have heard many examples of such events, and we are grateful to the hon. Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Dr Johnson) for sharing her expertise. People in the wider public often talk about MPs living in a bubble or ivory tower, but the hon. Lady's expert and practical knowledge demonstrates yet again that Members of Parliament are in touch and know what is happening out there. As the hon. Member for Henley (John Howell) said, it is right and proper to use our position to spread that knowledge and champion causes such as this.

In 2014, Mumsnet sponsored 20 mums to take part in British Red Cross baby and infant first aid training. All the mums rated the training highly, and one said:

"I really enjoyed the course as every single thing discussed could easily relate to me and my children. All the videos of real-life scenarios really brought it home how easily these things could happen, but now I feel confident and that I could make a real difference to the outcome, and would feel so much more knowledgeable on what to do in an emergency situation."

As we have heard, there are many different providers of first aid training for parents of infants. I specifically mentioned the British Red Cross, and other hon. Members have mentioned St John Ambulance, which offers first aid courses designed specifically for babies and children. There are also local providers, such as the one championed by the hon. Member for Truro and Falmouth. In addition, the NHS provides an online app to support parents with first aid for their infants. One parent said:

"Although you could read everything on the app and watch the videos for free, I think doing it in a class environment really makes you take it all in. It will also make you feel more confident if you were ever to need to help someone or your own child."

As the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care often reminds us, technology in the NHS is helpful, but it is not a substitute for services delivered by real people. In terms of first aid provision for parents, such apps can be useful to reinforce training given in a class setting, but they should not be seen as a substitute.

Dr Caroline Johnson: The hon. Lady is generous in giving way. Does she agree that both technology and face-to-face contact have their benefits and can be combined? A "sim" dolly is an electronic version of a resuscitation dolly, and when supervised resuscitation is provided to a baby, it provides electronic feedback on whether compressions are deep or fast enough, as that can be measured electronically by the dummy itself.

Julie Cooper: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her expertise in that technology, and such things can be used in combination with a class setting and training to support existing knowledge. I agree that, on specific occasions, such technology has an important role.

In terms of treatment, we lack consistency of provision and access. We have already spoken about distances to, and charges for, courses being a barrier for some parents. Shockingly, research by the Red Cross showed that 95% of parents did not know what to do when shown three examples of life-threatening medical emergencies. Surely it is time to ensure that training is available for every parent in every region. I take the point that we ought not to be prescriptive, but in leaving things to local providers, we must ensure that no one falls through the gaps and no parent is missed.

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health has warned that UK infant mortality levels are among the highest in the developed world. There are many reasons for that, but cuts to local child services, community health projects, and community midwives and health visitors have undoubtedly not helped. It is clearly desirable to ensure that this important provision is adequately funded, but a significant proportion of deaths could be prevented by ensuring that all parents are equipped with important first aid skills.

Of course, a parent first aider is no replacement for a health visitor or paramedic, but they can be the first line of defence when it comes to helping their children live longer and healthier lives. Informed parents can prevent unnecessary trips to the GP and inappropriate hospital admissions, and it is a shame that despite the support that community and parent first aiders provide to the NHS and families, they are barely mentioned in the NHS long-term plan. That is important because if the Secretary of State is serious about making the NHS the best health service in the world, and about having an NHS that promotes health and wellbeing through a focus on prevention, the Government must make first aid in the community a priority. Equipping parents to look after their infants is a good and important step.

Will the Minister take action to ensure that universal first aid training forms part of the antenatal care available to parents? This is about providing families and communities with the skills to step forward in an emergency so that tragedies can be avoided. Learning such skills can be the difference between a life saved and a life lost.

3.29 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Jackie Doyle-Price): I join all colleagues in thanking my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and Falmouth (Sarah Newton) for bringing this important subject forward for debate. She has brought to it her characteristic good sense and made her case extremely well. I join colleagues in paying tribute to her work as a Minister. I must say that I had to work with her regularly when she was Minister for Disabled People and I miss her terribly, but if today is anything to go by, I am sure she will keep me busy from her position on the Back Benches, and I thank her for that.

I thank all hon. Members who have participated today, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Douglas Ross), who brought his perspective as a new parent. If he will forgive my saying so, as he was articulating some of the things he learned, it brought home to me how new parents can be a bit like rabbits caught in headlights, thinking, "Oh my goodness, I've got this fragile thing, what am I to do?" Again, that brings home the need for parents to feel confident in looking after their newborns.

[Jackie Doyle-Price]

My hon. Friend the Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Dr Johnson) gave a forensic exposition of the risks children face, and reminded us that we are equipping people with good, common-sense practical skills for things that can happen to anybody. She made her arguments extremely well. It is always a pleasure to listen to the hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden); again, he brought the subject to life beautifully with his own experience and spoke excellent common sense.

I am surprised to hear that the hon. Member for Burnley (Julie Cooper) is a grandmother, but that probably explains why she speaks from such a well-informed perspective. I am glad that she shared Leanne's story, because it was a perfect example of how going through a course made that parent feel confident about how to deal with a child in distress, and helped her to understand exactly what the condition in front of her was.

Faced with such evidence, we can only do more to spread the news to parents that it is a good idea to equip themselves with first aid skills. From an NHS perspective, as the hon. Lady mentioned, if parents know more about their children's conditions, there will be fewer visits to A&E and fewer visits to GPs, and that will make the NHS more effective. In a sense, what is not to like?

There are many providers of such products in the market. We have heard about St John Ambulance, the Red Cross and other local providers, and I would not want to favour one or other of them, beyond highlighting that those courses are available, as well as material on the NHS app. I hear what the hon. Lady says—that that is no substitute—but I tend to see these things as complementary. Today's new parents are of the smartphone generation and want to access material via apps, and we must ensure that we have a good spread of information available to parents.

The death of any child is a tragedy, and the more we can do to support people to be the best possible parents, the better, because it is vital to the longer-term outcomes for the health and life chances of their children. I know my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and Falmouth brought her experience from her campaign to raise awareness of sepsis, which she referred to in her speech. Sepsis is a silent killer, and probably one of the most preventable causes of death, if we can identify it quickly enough. It is important that we continue to raise awareness so that people, and particularly parents, can spot the signs of sepsis and make decisions and interventions that will help sufferers.

Reference has been made to where we have these interventions and who can give new parents advice on first aid. I see midwives and health visitors as being on the frontline of doing that. My hon. Friend the Member for Moray explained that antenatal period when we are building a relationship and lapping up the information. The trust parents have in midwives and health visitors is a special relationship and presents a powerful opportunity for us to make an intervention to improve health outcomes for all. I see them as the cornerstone of ensuring that parents have the knowledge and skills they need before, during and after their baby's birth, and that they have access to all the information they need.

There is information on the NHS website with tips for new parents, including information on the signs of a serious illness in a baby or toddler, but it is important that health visitors talk through common conditions with parents. It is a question of confidence; it is about making parents feel confident that they know what is happening to their child and that they can do their best to help them.

That was brought home by the account my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and Falmouth gave of Rowena's story and the fact that Rowena felt able to take someone's child and help them because she had had that grounding. Such things can obviously go the other way, and none of us wants to be in the position of thinking, "What if?" or, "If only". There is clearly every reason to encourage as widespread training in first aid as is possible.

My hon. Friend has a simple ask: she wishes the Government to fund a pilot project to generate evidence for a further roll-out of the project she has witnessed locally in Cornwall. The National Institute for Health Research welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, and any application will of course be judged in the normal way. Awards are made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality, so I encourage her and the team she is working with to apply for such a grant so that we can, as she says, demonstrate that the training has an impact on outcomes and provides better value for money for the NHS. It seems to me to speak for itself, but I encourage her to go through that process.

Julie Cooper: Can the Minister assure us that, if funding is achieved for such a pilot and the training is shown to be beneficial, the Government will commit to universal provision?

Jackie Doyle-Price: That will come down to the evidence base. The hon. Lady raised some questions about prevention in her speech. Following the long-term plan, we are working up our wider proposals for prevention, and we see interventions in the early years and childhood as extremely important, so we will look at what measures we need to take in that context. At this stage, I am not able to commit to universal provision of a particular product, but we need to look at how we can best equip parents with the tools to look after their children as well as they possibly can.

Every parent wants their child to stay safe. Frankly, my hon. Friend the Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham scared me to death with the risks she highlighted, because they illustrate just how easily any one of us could fall victim to an accident, and for a child that is especially the case. We know that unintentional injuries are one of the main causes of premature death and illness for children in England. To put a figure on that, every year in England 55 children under the age of five die from injuries in and around the home, which is 7% of all deaths of children aged one to four. That is pretty stark. We can factor on to that the 370,000 visits to A&E departments and 40,000 emergency hospital admissions in England each year because of accidents at home among under-fives.

Preventing accidents is part of Public Health England's priority of giving children and young people the best start in life, and is an area to focus on. I was struck by

the reference to choking, because that is a situation where knowing what we are doing can be the difference between life and death; by the time an ambulance has been called, it will be too late. There is much more that we need to do to educate people on how to deal with a child who is choking, because it is something that can happen to any child. We have all seen children excited and gobbling their food down, and with that obviously comes the attendant risk.

As I mentioned, health visitors are accessible to all parents and provide a trusted source of knowledge, advice and information. I want to make sure that we take full advantage of health visitors in that space. Through our work on early years, we are looking at what more we can do to support them, to make the most of that intervention. I am confident that if we make better use of that workforce, we can take a lot of action in this area, not least because parents find engaging with their health visitor less intimidating than they perhaps find medical professionals or anyone else; it is a relationship built up in the home. Health visitors are also the part of the scheme that deals not only with mum but with dad and the rest of the family as well, which is so important. Health visitors lead and support the delivery of preventive programmes for infants and children from nought to five years old through the healthy child programme, including by giving regular advice on accident prevention and links to wider community resources.

Julie Cooper: Does that mean that the Minister is committed to restoring the number of health visitors?

Jackie Doyle-Price: The hon. Lady will be aware that there has been a fall in the number of health visitors, following a peak in 2015. I am extremely committed to making sure that we have an ample supply of health visitors, because they are on the frontline of early intervention; they are an army. She will know that the NHS long-term plan, recognising that local authorities have borne the brunt of fiscal discipline in this area, explicitly says that we will strengthen the relationship between the NHS and local authorities in this space, because that is clearly good for health outcomes. I hope that that reassures the hon. Lady.

I could go on for much longer, Mr Hollobone, but I do not want to stretch your indulgence unduly. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Truro and Falmouth for all her work on this matter and on raising awareness of sepsis. We will continue to co-operate in this area. I can tell her that Public Health England very much has this area on its radar, in terms of giving advice to parents on how best to look after their children. We will continue to work with the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health to establish a single, England-wide paediatric early warning system to improve the recognition and response of healthcare services to deteriorating children or young people across England in primary and community care, including in the ambulance service and hospitals. Information and advice to help parents recognise and respond to signs and symptoms of ill health are freely available.

We must continue to champion and promote this cause. I thank midwives and health visitors for their tremendous work—they play such an important role in

this—as well as providers of first aid courses. I look forward to engaging with my hon. Friend further on this matter.

3.43 pm

Sarah Newton: I hope, now that we are at the end of the debate, that the words on the Order Paper are beginning to make a bit more sense. It has been a fantastic debate, and I am grateful to the many Members who have come along today, particularly as there has been so much about Brexit in the main Chamber. That people have chosen to spend time here this afternoon underlines how important this issue really is.

It was great to hear from the parents in the room, including my hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Outwood (Andrea Jenkyns), and my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Douglas Ross) and the hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden), who I congratulate on becoming new fathers and on being prepared to speak so personally and eloquently about their journey as parents. If as a result of this debate we have done nothing more than to make sure that they sign up to courses and tell all their friends who are also young parents to go out and do those courses, we will have achieved something.

I also thank the hon. Member for Burnley (Julie Cooper) for reminding us of the important contribution of grandparents. More than ever, grandparents care directly for babies and children, so it is important that they are also trained and feel confident, because things change over time. It is good to hear a grandparent's point of view.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Henley (John Howell) rightly reminded us, we are all champions in this place, whatever our personal experience. Whether we are like my hon. Friend the Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Dr Johnson), who brings huge professional expertise, or we are unqualified but passionate advocates for our communities, we have a very important role. I am sure that the my hon. Friend the Member for Henley will join my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mary Robinson) and the hon. Members for Belfast South (Emma Little Pengelly) and for Strangford (Jim Shannon) in leading campaigns in their constituencies to raise awareness of the courses and training that are available, so that more parents feel confident and able to identify the signs of serious illness or injury and to take appropriate action.

I am grateful to the Minister, whom I thoroughly enjoyed working with; I miss working with her. I will certainly take up her kind offer to follow up on the debate. I was particularly interested in her point about the NHS long-term plan and the important future for health visitors. I agree: when I was a new mum, the health visitor arriving each day was a really valuable service. That support from the health visitor was essential in starting me off on my parenting journey. I understand that the Minister is personally committed to developing that workforce, not only in numbers but in their range of skills, and that she is looking at what further roles they may play in providing this important training to new parents. Her suggestion that we work on that is really positive.

I will certainly take up the opportunity to evaluate the first aid courses that are available in my community in Cornwall and the impact that they are having not

[Sarah Newton]

only on families, but on our local NHS. My hon. Friend the Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham warns me that the forms can be very long and that it can be an arduous process, but we will certainly give it a go. I look forward to working with my hon. Friend the Minister to do what all of us in this room want: to make sure that parents of any age get the best possible support in starting that amazing journey of being parents, so that all their children grow up to be healthy and happy, and we avoid all preventable deaths and injuries.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered infant first aid training for parents.

3.47 pm

Sitting suspended.

Non-stun Slaughter of Animals

[SIR HENRY BELLINGHAM *in the Chair*]

4 pm

Mr Laurence Robertson (Tewkesbury) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered non-stun slaughter of animals.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Henry. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on this issue, which is of concern to me personally, as well as many of my constituents and the wider public. I thank the British Veterinary Association for campaigning on this issue and its guidance ahead of this debate. I declare that I am an honorary member of the BVA, for which there is no reward other than regular contact, which is available to all hon. Members. Many constituents have contacted me on this subject, including quite a few from the farming community.

Like many other people I am a consumer of meat and an animal lover, and I do not believe those two positions are mutually exclusive. A discussion of the non-stun slaughter of animals must be based not on strength of feeling, but on evidence. Having considered some of the evidence, I feel that there is a strong case to be made for the banning of non-stun slaughter. The BVA believes “that slaughter without pre-stunning unnecessarily compromises animal welfare and that animals should be stunned before slaughter.”

Sir Greg Knight (East Yorkshire) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that the situation could be vastly improved in the short term by changing our labelling laws and requiring products to be labelled to show whether stunning has taken place? Does he further agree that one benefit of leaving the EU is regaining control of our food-labelling laws?

Mr Robertson: I agree with my right hon. Friend on both of those points. I will come on to say more about the former point; I suspect that I will be called out of order if I go too far down the latter.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Like the hon. Gentleman, I eat red meat regularly and I am also an animal lover. However, I do believe we can accommodate people. If we had the labelling to indicate whether stunning was used, people would have the opportunity to choose whether to buy that meat.

Mr Robertson: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's comments.

Pre-stunning renders animals immediately unconscious and insensible to pain before they are slaughtered. In the absence of stunning, animals can feel the pain of the neck cut, experience a delay to loss of consciousness and experience the pain and distress of aspirating blood into the respiratory tract. While there is no nice way to end an animal's life, many would agree that that is a particularly distressing account of the last moments of an animal's life.

John Howell (Henley) (Con): I understand what my hon. Friend is saying about stunning, but unfortunately, it does not always work. Something like 26,000 cattle, 100,000 pigs and 9.5 million chickens are mis-stunned each year. How do we solve that problem?

Mr Robertson: My hon. Friend raises a good and important point. I do not pretend for one moment that the practice is absolutely perfect. It does need to be improved, but the objective should be to go down that road, rather than have animals slaughtered without stunning. He raises a perfectly good point.

Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that on many occasions stunning involves sending a very strong electric shock to the animal, which can suffer for about 20 or 25 minutes while it is being made unconscious, causing excruciating pain?

Mr Robertson: That should not be the case, but if it is, that practice needs outlawing as well.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Robertson: I will give way as often as I am requested to do so. However, I am not yet on my second page. I am sure you will agree, Sir Henry, that time is limited as this is a half-hour debate and we have already used five minutes. I will give way to the hon. Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith), then the hon. Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes) and then my hon. Friend the Member for North Cornwall (Scott Mann).

Angela Smith (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Ind): I will be brief. Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that one way to deal with this issue is to look at labelling from the potential of blockchain technology, which could provide complete traceability within the system and help to identify those abattoirs that are identified as having those issues, thus putting consumer power at the heart of the process?

Mr Robertson: That is a good point. I will come on to say that all this needs discussing in detail.

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Ind): Many of my constituents have contacted me about this issue. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the traditional methods of slaughter, which are used in the Muslim and Jewish religions, are in fact more humane than some of the modern practices, which either do not work properly or do not give due consideration to the welfare of the animal?

Mr Robertson: That point has been raised with me. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman has seen appendix one to the briefing from the BVA, which gives quite a bit of distressing evidence about the non-stun slaughter of animals. Let us try to move on.

Scott Mann (North Cornwall) (Con): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for bringing this debate and taking my intervention. Does he agree that many residents in my constituency want proper labelling—as has been mentioned—so that they can make a conscious choice about how their animals are killed? I am a great believer in labelling, and I hope that the Minister is listening. We should push for better labelling for slaughtered animals.

Mr Robertson: I agree entirely. That may be the compromise we settle on for now.

I do accept and understand that this is an emotive and sensitive issue, because it can overlap with religious belief. However, this debate is not about preventing people from practicing their faith. I do not want to incorrectly conflate non-stun slaughter with religious slaughter.

There are some misconceptions. For example, many people think that halal meat is all non-stunned. It is difficult to get exact figures, but I am advised that less than half of halal meat falls under that practice. However, shechita, the Jewish religious method of slaughter is solely non-stun. I am not concerned about expressions of religious belief, though I do think that our beliefs sometimes have to be tempered by the fact that we should not cause another living thing harm when that can be mitigated.

Giles Watling (Clacton) (Con): Are we not aiming for a civilised society in which we honour the meat that feeds us by giving it a good a life and as painless an end as possible?

Mr Robertson: I agree entirely. My concerns are therefore completely grounded in animal welfare. This topic is just one element of a wider debate we should be having on animal welfare at slaughter, including ensuring that the existing animal welfare standards that we have in place are met. I hope that we can encourage a sensible debate on this issue.

As a nation, we are increasingly concerned with animal welfare on a broad range of issues, and rightly so. The Government have an excellent record on animal welfare, responding to demands for mandatory CCTV in slaughter houses, addressing plastics in the oceans and tackling the illegal ivory trade. Today, we had a ten-minute rule Bill on animal sentience that will impose a duty on public bodies to have due regard to the welfare needs of animals as sentient beings when formulating or implementing policy. The Government are committed to doing that, so I ask them to consider some of the things that I am suggesting.

Consumers are rightly concerned about the quality of life of animals before slaughter, as my hon. Friend the Member for Clacton (Giles Watling) said. That also extends to concerns about the ending of animals' lives, which is a concern for farmers across my constituency, who feel strongly that the animals they have carefully bred should not suffer unnecessarily in their final minutes. I therefore suggest that the Government look at banning non-stun slaughter, if they feel that the evidence points that way and that it would be appropriate. That is a position based on scientific evidence and supported by the BVA, the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe, the Farm Animal Welfare Committee and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Naz Shah (Bradford West) (Lab): I am not suggesting that the hon. Gentleman is saying this, but does he agree that the truth is that the debate about banning slaughter has an impact on, and is correlated with, the rise in Islamophobia and antisemitism? It is used as a tool by Tommy Robinson et al. and by newspapers to propagate headlines such as “Halal secret of Pizza Express” and “Brit kids forced to eat Halal school dinners”. It goes into that area.

Mr Robertson: I am glad the hon. Lady excludes me from any suggestion of that. If anybody takes up the issue on that basis, they are completely wrong and ignorant of the debate—including the reasonable debate we are having in this Chamber.

Action has been taken by several countries, whether through a ban, clearer labelling or ensuring that production is based on demand. Slaughter without pre-stunning has been banned in Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Denmark. Other countries such as Austria, Estonia, Finland and Slovakia require post-cut stunning immediately after the incision if the animal has not already been stunned.

Andrea Jenkyns (Morley and Outwood) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend for securing this important debate. I have been a vegetarian for 20-odd years, which is why I support banning this method because of the animal rights issue. Does he agree that we must ensure that there are strict customs checks on animal products imported from third countries into the UK and that those products have the same high standards as we require from our farmers?

Mr Robertson: I agree with my hon. Friend's important point.

As I was saying, a range of approaches are being taken and a ban would not be unprecedented. As we have already heard, there is considerable support for clearer labelling and for preventing the production of non-stunned meat beyond the needs of our domestic market. I ask the Government to consider the full range of approaches that has been taken across the world and, if they are not prepared to consider a ban, to investigate those other options.

Naz Shah: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that while we are having the debate, we must ensure—I cannot speak for the other countries that he named—the religious freedom that our democracy is so proud of? In this instance, we are talking about two religious communities, the Jewish community and the Muslim community, which are directly affected by the debate and what he is proposing.

Mr Robertson: I made it clear at the beginning that the debate is about animal welfare, and I certainly do not want to suggest what is right and wrong with regard to religion; the debate should not be seen as that in any way. I have given way an awful lot, so I will have to move on a bit. I was going to go through the EU law on slaughter, which is contained in a Council regulation, but I will have to speed up, otherwise the Minister will not have a chance to respond.

In response to the hon. Lady's point, as I have mentioned, while some slaughter practices do not allow pre-stunning, in accordance with religious rites, some halal authorities consider that pre-stunning is permissible, provided that the stun does not kill the animal and that the animal could have theoretically regained consciousness. That is an important point, because many consumers of meat may not buy it if it is signified as halal because they believe it is from an animal that was not stunned. That represents an unnecessary loss to the market.

I ask the Government to address the evidence being put forward by organisations such as the BVA and RSPCA. There have been a number of stark illustrations,

which I referred to earlier. I will not go through them all again, but I am happy to send hon. Members copies of the BVA submission if they would like.

In the absence of a ban, we could move forward in other ways. The first way forward is to look at over-production. If non-stun slaughter is to continue, I ask that we ensure that supply only meets demand and does not exceed it. For example, in Germany, abattoirs are permitted to slaughter animals without stunning only if they show that they have local religious customers for the request. To obtain that permission, applicants need to fulfil several requirements, including on slaughter procedure, species and the number of animals. I ask that the Government take steps to require abattoirs to illustrate levels of demand and issue licences on that basis.

A second way forward is to ensure that the supply of non-stunned meat is for domestic demand. I ask the Government to examine export patterns and consider whether the export of non-stunned meat from the UK reflects the intentions of the derogation from EU law. Again, I could give figures on how the export of non-stunned animals has increased considerably over the past few years, but time does not permit it.

A third way forward relates to the important issue of labelling, which several hon. Members have raised. It is essential for a number of reasons, including the misconceptions that people may have about certain products such as halal, and on the basis that consumers have a right to know where their meat comes from, how it was reared and how it was slaughtered. There is a wider issue about food labelling, and many people want the country of origin of food to be labelled more precisely and accurately. That can form part of the discussions about labelling.

Giles Watling: I thank my hon. Friend for his generosity in giving way. If we introduce labelling on stun and non-stun meat in this country, will that not also send a message to countries where the actual torture of animals is a regular part of the slaughtering process? I speak of some of those places where dog meat is regularly consumed.

Mr Robertson: I agree with my hon. Friend that it could make a difference. I have cut short my speech considerably to allow other hon. Members to join in, which I certainly do not object to doing, but I could have provided more evidence for my points if I had had time—never mind.

There is a divergence of opinion on the issue, so I ask the Minister to consider holding a number of roundtable meetings with stakeholders, such as religious groups, farmers, vets and anybody else who has something useful to contribute, including perhaps hon. Members. I ask him to engage in the discussions about the process—I am sure he is already taking it seriously—to see whether we can find a way forward. No matter what people's backgrounds, religions, or anything else, they do not want to see the unnecessary suffering of animals. I am sure he will engage with the subject, and I hope he will get people round a table to talk about it in great detail and see what progress we can make.

4.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (David Rutley): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Henry.

It is good to be involved in another well-attended animal welfare debate. I am mindful that I am spending more time with hon. Members—if not on Brexit, then on animal welfare—than with members of my family, but I would like to put it on the record that it is my daughter Jenny's 13th birthday. I had to do it somehow; I called her this morning as well.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tewkesbury (Mr Robertson) on securing the debate and on the tone with which he discussed the topic. It is an emotive issue, as we know, and I am grateful for the way in which hon. Members have sought to talk about it in an evidence-based way, whether raising opinions from a welfare or a religious perspective. That is to be welcomed.

Imran Hussain (Bradford East) (Lab): I thank the Minister for giving way and I also thank the hon. Member for Tewkesbury (Mr Robertson), who secured the debate, especially for his explicit and helpful statement at the outset that he did not intend in any way to impact on religious freedom or expression. Will the Minister confirm that, regardless of the outcome of the ongoing Brexit negotiations, the rights of the Jewish and Muslim faiths to have meat prepared in accordance with their beliefs will always be protected?

David Rutley: Yes, I can confirm that, but it is important that we have a discussion about these issues and I will come on to say how we can do that. However, since the 1930s we have had a tradition of respecting the religious rights of both the Jewish community and the Muslim community, and we will honour that tradition.

Let me try to make some progress, because I have heard a lot of people's points and I want to respond. Of course, if there are interventions I will take them, but there is quite a lot to come back on from the interventions that have already been made. Perhaps I can try to rattle through and answer as many questions as possible.

Of course, the focus here is animal welfare concerns. My hon. Friend the Member for Clacton (Giles Watling) and the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) contributed, and although I do not think that the hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron) said anything, I know that she is here with the hat on of concern about animal welfare. I am very proud that we have so many MPs who are interested in this issue, but the fact is that we have some of the highest standards of animal welfare in the world, and as we leave the EU we will improve them further.

The Government are taking action in a number of areas to further protect and ensure the welfare of animals, for example by increasing maximum sentences for animal cruelty tenfold, from six months' imprisonment to five years' imprisonment. We are also banning the use of electronic shock collars and third-party puppy and kitten sales, and we have already banned the online sale of puppies.

Andrea Jenkyns: Will my hon. Friend give way?

David Rutley: This will be the last one, because I want to get on to the substantive issues.

Andrea Jenkyns: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way and I will be very brief. I just want to commend the Government for what they have done regarding animal

rights over the last few years. The Minister himself came to the Dogs Trust event that I organised last year. I am proud to be a Conservative because of the way the Government champion animal rights, and I thank them for that.

David Rutley: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. I am really pleased that the Conservative party is interested in this issue, and I am really pleased that the Labour party and the Scottish National party are taking an active interest too. This is a cross-party issue. We are trying to push through so much legislation and I know that there is frustration about just when we will be able to make it happen. I share that frustration, but hopefully hon. Members know, after all the debates that we have had in recent days, that we are working very hard to try to make these things happen.

Let me come back to the point about religious slaughter. On non-stun slaughter in particular, I restate that it is the Government's preference that all animals are stunned before slaughter. However, as I said in answer to the hon. Member for Bradford East (Imran Hussain)—this relates to the comments made by the hon. Member for Bradford West (Naz Shah)—the Government respect the rights of Jews and Muslims to eat meat prepared in accordance with their beliefs. Therefore, we allow religious slaughter of animals by Muslims and Jews intended for consumption by Muslim and Jewish communities, in keeping with their traditions.

The Government believe that this is an important religious freedom. There is a long history of upholding it in legislation, dating back to the Slaughter of Animals Act 1933. We remember from our history books what was going on at that time in the '30s. Important decisions were made in relation to that Act, which contained an exception from stunning for religious slaughter for Jews and Muslims. Since then, the rules governing religious slaughter have developed to provide additional protections to animals that are slaughtered in accordance with religious rites, while still permitting non-stun slaughter for Jews and Muslims.

When we discuss religious slaughter, it is worth bearing in mind that often in the case of halal meat the relevant Muslim authorities are content that the animal is stunned. Although we produce a significant amount of halal sheepmeat in this country, two thirds of it is from sheep that are stunned before slaughter.

Today there are both EU and domestic regulations that protect the welfare of animals at the time of killing. Within that legislation, there are additional rules for those animals slaughtered in accordance with religious rites, specifically for the production of halal or kosher meat. The primary aim of the welfare at slaughter regulations, which are based on a body of scientific evidence and advice from the European Food Safety Authority, is to ensure that animals are spared avoidable pain, distress or suffering at the time of killing, which was one of the key points that my hon. Friend the Member for Tewkesbury made in his very important speech.

The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015—WATOK—imposed stricter national rules for religious slaughter and provided greater protections than those contained in the EU regulation, which sets baseline Europe-wide standards. For instance, we prohibit the inversion of cattle for religious slaughter, which

[David Rutley]

some member states, such as France, still allow. This ban followed the 1985 report of the Farm Animal Welfare Council, which recommended that inversion be banned.

The hon. Member for Bolton South East (Yasmin Qureshi) raised concerns about mis-stunning. The official veterinarians of the Food Standards Agency will take enforcement action against mis-stunning.

Yasmin Qureshi: Will the Minister allow me to intervene on that point?

David Rutley: It will have to be a really quick intervention.

Sir Henry Bellingham (in the Chair): One last one.

Yasmin Qureshi: I thank the Minister for mentioning mis-stunning. Will he ensure that if there is going to be labelling, we are told on the label exactly the methodology adopted in the stunning?

David Rutley: That is an important point. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Tewkesbury, there are so many things that I would like to talk about to try to reassure people here. I will skim through them and then come back to that point about labelling. If I may, I will make that the last intervention, then I think I will be able to answer the other points that have been made.

Mary Glendon (North Tyneside) (Lab): Will the Minister give way?

David Rutley: Yes, of course, but that will have to be the last intervention.

Mary Glendon: My brother is a meat inspector; I will just make that clear. There is CCTV in all slaughterhouses now. Is that eliminating cruelty? Are the Government monitoring the footage?

David Rutley: That is spooky, because the next point in my speech was to say that one of the key things we have done in recent years—adding to the list of things that we have talked about already—is to add CCTV in slaughterhouses. That is a major step forward and it helps to deal with all the welfare issues that we have talked about today. It was introduced in May last year and I think that it is now effective in all slaughterhouses.

Let me just try to get to the most important part of my response to the debate. The hon. Member for Morley and Outwood (Andrea Jenkyns) talked about animals being imported into the UK and asked whether they should be slaughtered to UK standards. Yes, they should; it is a legal requirement.

The hon. Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith) talked about blockchain technology and whether we could use it to improve traceability. Yes, I think the industry should consider that; indeed, it probably will consider it, as it considers how to move things forward.

The heart of the discussion today has been about labelling. [*Interruption.*] I know, but I am just trying to answer the question, so I do not lose track of that point. We know that concerns have been voiced about meat from animal slaughter without stunning being sold to consumers who do not require their meat to be prepared in that way. The Government are clear that we want people to have the information they need to make informed choices about the food that they buy. The Government believe that consumers should have the necessary information available to them to make an informed choice about their food, and the issue of revised labelling is something that the Government are considering in the context of the UK's exit from the EU, as I set out in a speech at the annual dinner for the BVA back in February.

It is important to note that there are other groups that want to know not only whether the meat is from a stunned or non-stunned animal, but what method of slaughter has been used. That will need to be considered in the wider review of labelling.

As I begin to wind up, it is important to recognise that the labelling of meat is something that we want to take a closer look at. I set out earlier that that will be part of a much wider review of labelling, which will include consideration of welfare standards, sustainability and, of course, safety for consumers. I also highlight that we want to go on respecting the rights of Jews and Muslims to eat meat that is prepared in accordance with their beliefs. However, in seeking to address the welfare standards and issues that have been discussed today, we will continue to explore ways to further improve the welfare standards for all animals, including when they are slaughtered.

Our next step—this relates to an important point that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Tewkesbury—will be further discussion with a range of interested parties across the debate at a forthcoming roundtable meeting to talk through many of the issues that have been raised today. I think that that is the way we need to do things: talk about the issues and see what we can do to improve welfare, but at the same time respect religious rights. Labelling will be key, but we will continue to encourage an active dialogue with all interested parties as part of our wider objective to enhance our already world-leading animal welfare standards.

I will leave it at that, but I thank hon. Members for their important contributions to this vital debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Veteran Suicide

4.30 pm

Stephen Morgan (Portsmouth South) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered veteran suicide.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Henry.

"I love my family but hate my life. I need help. I'm scared now it hurts." Those are the words sent in an email to the mental health services by David Jonathon Jukes, who served in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Iraq twice, and Afghanistan. David Jukes was incredibly brave, as is his wife Jo, who has given me permission to share his heart-wrenching story. Despite what he did for his country, Dave was let down in his time of need. He was let down in 1997, when he was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder but still deployed to a war zone. He was let down in 2012, when he returned from Afghanistan and was not properly diagnosed with a personality disorder. He was let down in 2018, when his priority need was not properly recorded and he was forced to wait weeks to see a doctor.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): I am horrified to hear that David was deployed if he had been diagnosed with PTSD. I am really surprised that that happened; I would not have thought any commanding officer would have sanctioned that. If the hon. Gentleman says that happened, so it did, but they should not have allowed him to deploy, because someone with PTSD can be a really big problem for his friends who he has to protect, as they have to protect him.

Stephen Morgan: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I will carry on with my story, and explain a bit more about this personal case.

David was let down by the crisis team that turned him away because he was not in its records, and he was let down when a two-hour stand-off with eight police officers and two negotiators did not result in his sectioning for his own safety. He was let down by the home treatment team when it did not respond to 26 phone calls made by his loving wife, and refused to come out to support him. On 9 October 2018, David Jonathon Jukes, a veteran of five conflicts and a hero by anyone's standards, took his own life. That truly harrowing tale is indicative of many other instances of veterans being passed around by Departments without any kind of tailored approach to their mental health services, and that is why we are here today.

There are about 5 million members of the armed forces community in the UK, and about 15,000 men and women leave service each year. It is important to stress that the majority of those individuals do not experience a decline in mental health upon their transition to civilian life, but we are here to talk about those who do. Last year, 58 veterans took their own life. That is a shocking statistic—but most important, a shocking loss of life.

Ruth Smeeth (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing such an important debate. While the official figures state that there were 58 veteran suicides last year, numbers from the third sector

and supportive organisations suggest that there were closer to 100, if not more. Is it not the case that one challenge with this issue is that we do not have the data we need to assess the scale of the problem?

Stephen Morgan: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and that is something I will be coming on to later. This issue transcends party politics, and for me, today's debate is about cross-party co-operation.

Andrea Jenkyns (Morley and Outwood) (Con): I thank the hon. Gentleman for securing this important debate; we can see from the number of Members present how this topic touches people's hearts. He has made the point about 58 veterans taking their own life. Does he agree that the mental health of our brave veterans should be a top priority for Government, and that the Ministry of Defence and the NHS need to work more closely together to ensure that veterans get all the support they need and to treat those who risk so much to protect us and our country?

Stephen Morgan: I thank the hon. Lady for her intervention, and she is absolutely right. There is more that the NHS and charities across our country can do, and I will say more about that later on.

I look forward to hearing views from colleagues across the House and working with them to improve the care given to the brave men and women who, day in and day out, put on their uniforms to keep us safe. I welcome today's announcement of a £700,000 investment in veteran mental health in my Portsmouth constituency, following a long-running campaign by the Portsmouth *News* and local campaigners—a really good example of partnership working making a difference. However, there is much more that we need to do. No other job exerts the same control over a person's life; no other job asks them to go into the line of fire. Our approach to veterans' care needs to reflect those facts.

Ged Killen (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Lab/Co-op): This morning, I received a very heartfelt and upsetting email from two women married to two former British Army infantrymen. Both men have been admitted to psychiatric wards in the past six months; both have attempted suicide, or caused serious risk to their health. The women described the shortfall in health resources and the lack of specialist expertise in dealing with combat trauma as "catastrophic", and they say they are fighting with all their might to keep their husbands alive and for the future happiness and life prospects of their families, especially their children. Does my hon. Friend agree that as well as supporting our brave veterans, we need to do everything we can to support their brave families?

Stephen Morgan: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. He is absolutely right. We should not have to fight for people to get the support that they need; it is imperative that they are given that support in their hour of need.

We need an approach to veterans' care that reflects a number of facts. Exceptional grassroots organisations such as Forgotten Veterans UK and All Call Signs—representatives of which are here in force—have said that we need tailored, bespoke mental health care that is

[Stephen Morgan]

in line with the experiences of brave men and women like Dave, who have put themselves in harm's way for our benefit. That is mirrored by the advice given by organisations such as Combat Stress.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Slough) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this important debate on veteran suicide. In the past decade, the number of new referrals to Combat Stress, the excellent organisation that he mentioned, has doubled; its helpline received more than 12,000 calls just last year. As my hon. Friend will be more than aware, it is estimated that one ex-serviceperson commits suicide every seven days. Does he agree that it is ridiculous that the Government currently refuse to collect any data on this widespread problem, so we cannot identify its full scale?

Stephen Morgan: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. He is absolutely right: we need that data so that we can understand the extent of the issue, and then do something about it.

Sir Mark Hendrick (Preston) (Lab/Co-op): I have recently been approached by two veterans who live fairly close to the barracks in my constituency, and who are very concerned about this issue. Dr Walter Busuttill, who is the consultant psychiatrist and medical director at the charity Combat Stress, has said:

"In the UK, coroners are reluctant to call something a suicide unless it is obvious. They will often go with a narrative verdict... Other countries record more accurate suicide studies."

Is it not a fact that many suicides in the Army and in other forces are not recorded because of narrative verdicts?

Stephen Morgan: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. He is absolutely right. There is a stigma around this issue, and it is crucial that we learn from our allies; we can learn a lot from them.

The need for tailored care is exemplified by a survey commissioned by Help for Heroes, which found that nearly 30% of veterans are put off from visiting mental health services on the grounds that they believe civilian services will not understand their needs. Serious funding issues are also hindering the provision of care to veterans: only 0.07% of the £150 billion NHS budget is allocated to veteran-specific funding.

Ruth Smeeth: I am delighted that my hon. Friend is so articulately putting forward the findings of the Defence Committee's report on mental health services and the needs we have. I am interested in the fact that only £10 million of the NHS budget was spent on these issues last year. One of the biggest challenges that Help for Heroes has identified is that the Ministry of Defence has a responsibility to look after veterans for only 12 months after they have left the service, but some veterans are only coming forward with these challenges five years later. Does my hon. Friend agree that the MOD's responsibility for veterans' care should continue for five years after they have left the service?

Stephen Morgan: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and I thank her for her valuable contributions to the Defence Committee, which has raised a number of the

issues. That figure that I mentioned is less than it costs to buy two Challenger tanks. That is what we are dealing with today. How can we expect to provide care for veterans like Dave when such an insultingly small amount of money is on the table? It is not just funding that is damaging development in this area; we are lagging behind in so many other ways.

Andrea Jenkyns: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Stephen Morgan: I am going to carry on. Canada, New Zealand and America are our allies and have similarly structured militaries and political systems. One thing we do not share with them is that their coroners record veterans' suicides. How can we begin to address the problem if we do not know its true scale? Currently only one out of 98 coroners across England and Wales records the detail that the deceased in a suicide case is a veteran. That means the scale of the problem is unknown. Since my election, I have been working with experts in the field, such as All Call Signs and Combat Stress, which have been calling for the recording of veterans' suicides. I hosted a summit on the matter in my constituency late last year.

Despite the cries from those who know best, the Government have repeatedly refused the requests, whose importance cannot be overstated. Current estimates project that the true figure could be as high as one ex-serviceperson killing themselves every seven days, but the problem is likely to be far worse, given that we do not have detailed recording. General Sir David Richards, former head of the armed forces, and Colonel Richard Kemp, former commander in Afghanistan, have called for coroners to start logging veterans' suicides. That is absolutely right. As the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the hon. Member for Thurrock (Jackie Doyle-Price), has said that

"the Government could do better on tracking suicide rates among veterans".

Grassroots expert organisations have been highlighting the importance of tracking those rates since their inception. As we heard earlier, the Defence Committee made it one of their key recommendations. When will the Government listen to the voices of those who know best and when will the Minister ensure that coroners begin to record the data? The disorganised, disjointed and disorderly approach to determining who is responsible for treating veterans, highlighted by Dave's case, is an extension of the Government's own ambiguity and confusion. When I tabled this Westminster Hall debate, that was exposed. Within 24 hours, two Departments had called me to express why they would be answering my questions, followed by an email stating:

"I believe there has been some confusion from our side and it's confirmed that the MoD will be responding to the debate."

With an issue of this magnitude, the Government should at least know who is responsible.

We can start making a change now. We cannot afford not to. The Government have initiated an inquiry into veterans' mental health, but we need changes at the coalface now. We cannot afford to lose more of our servicepeople. I am committed to my party's policy of a social contract for veterans, which incorporates a rounded approach to care that includes support for mental health, housing and retaining. That would begin with officially

logging the numbers of veterans who take their own life and would see veterans given priority when it comes to mental health services.

I started my speech by telling Dave's story, and I will finish by quoting someone to whom the issue could not be closer. Dave's wife, Jo Jukes, said:

"If coroners began recording veterans' deaths, the MoD would be forced to accept there was a problem and have to do something. It is a major failing. We need a far more joined up approach to veterans' mental health care."

It is clear that the Government do not know how big the problem is because they do not have the data. Some have said they are hiding behind their ignorance. I hope the Minister will take on board the comments in this debate. I look forward to his response.

Sir Henry Bellingham (in the Chair): Before I call the next speaker, I note that we have nine applications to speak. I urge Members to keep their speeches as short as possible—perhaps three minutes to start with.

4.45 pm

Dr Dan Poulter (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Henry. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Portsmouth South (Stephen Morgan) for securing this debate. I agree with much of what he said. He is right to say that, historically, there has been a disconnect between what the MOD and the NHS do in providing better care for veterans. When I was a Health Minister, I worked with the then Minister of State for Defence, my right hon. Friend the Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois), to improve mental health support, first aid training and other support and help available to armed services families. We also worked to support the MOD in better tracking veterans immediately after discharge from the services. I entirely agree with the point the hon. Gentleman made about one year not being enough.

To put the debate in context—it is important that we have the right evidence and data to support the making of informed decisions about veterans' care—overall suicide rates for those serving in the armed forces are low, with the exception of males in the Army aged between 16 and 19. Evidence suggests that elevated suicide rates among 16 to 19-year-olds are related to issues such as Deepcut-type events and difficulties adjusting to life in the armed forces, as opposed to being deployment-related.

In the US, veteran suicide rates are definitely higher than population suicide rates, but just as in the UK, and perhaps surprisingly, they do not appear to be deployment-related, and there is much speculation as to why higher rates of suicide are experienced by US veterans, as compared with UK veterans.

Bob Stewart: Soldiers who are between 16 and 19 can deploy on operations only for two of those years. I totally understand that there will be other reasons involved, but soldiers cannot go on operations until they are 18 years old.

Dr Poulter: I defer to my hon. Friend's considerable experience as a long-standing and distinguished soldier with a long-standing and distinguished record of service in our armed forces. I had the pleasure of serving in the

NHS with a number of Ministry of Defence or armed forces doctors. I certainly know that they pay particular attention to these issues now, and the MOD has put a lot more into the training and support available to their doctors to better support veterans.

We have good data on suicide rates among Falklands veterans and veterans from the 1991 Gulf war. There is no evidence to suggest that the rates of suicide among that group of veterans are any higher than those in the rest of the armed forces; in fact, there is evidence that the rate of suicide among those groups is lower than expected population rates.

We do not have reliable evidence for the more recent Iraq and Afghan conflicts—the hon. Gentleman alluded to that in his remarks. There is a lot of anecdotal evidence and evidence emerging from coroners' reports, but anecdote is not hard evidence. We need to work much harder on that to ensure that we have the hard evidence to make the right decisions.

In terms of gathering that hard data, the announcement by the Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), that the MOD has agreed to carry out definitive research by tagging all those who have served in Telic and Herrick is very much to be welcomed. That work is starting with defence statistics, but it is difficult to know how and when it will be completed—these days, it is challenging and bureaucratic to get data out of the Office for National Statistics, and that is hampered by general data protection regulation issues. However, the work that Professor Simon Wessely and his team at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience are doing with the MOD will happen and should give us the answer. Hopefully it will build a strong evidence base for improving veterans' care in future.

Finally, we need better to join up what happens when veterans leave the Army and register with the NHS. The current situation is not right, and we need to improve it. The MOD should compulsorily register veterans with civilian healthcare services when they are discharged from the armed services. To my knowledge, that does not happen, but it should happen routinely, because it would help serving men and women transition back into civilian life. It would also flag up to GPs that somebody is a veteran and has a serving record.

It is important that we get the data right. Anything that the Minister can do to help with the issues surrounding GDPR, make the ONS data more speedily available for population-based comparisons and support the work of Professor Simon Wessely and the IoPPN, would be greatly welcome.

4.50 pm

Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Henry. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth South (Stephen Morgan) on securing this timely debate. He made an excellent speech, and has done the House a great service in bringing this matter to our attention.

I am conscious that time is short, so I will be brief. I was reflecting earlier on the fact that it has been some time since I last wore uniform and was on operations. Over the period since, there have been many times when I have remembered with absolute clarity the faces of fallen friends. Regimental reunions, Remembrance Sunday

[*Dan Jarvis*]

and anniversaries all give pause for thought and cause to remember. In addition to those occasions, there are the unexpected triggers: a turn of phrase, an accent or someone's gait when they are walking down the street. They can all prompt the memory of a comrade who is no longer with us.

That is the cost of combat and, to an extent, it is to be expected. However, what I did not expect is the roll call of new additions to that list of faces. It seems now that not a week goes by without the sad news of another veteran's death—all too often, tragically, as a result of suicide. It is not because we are currently on major combat operations; we are not. It is because the impacts of the operations that we were on have lived longer in the memory, feelings and mental health of those who served than any of us could have expected.

Emma Little Pengelly (Belfast South) (DUP): On the length of time that it can take for trauma to manifest itself, we in Northern Ireland have had a number of useful research reports, some of which were authored by David Bolton, indicating that post-traumatic stress disorder, including among veterans, has sometimes not manifested itself for 10, 20 or even 30 years after active service. It would be useful for the Ministry of Defence to take those reports into account, and to learn from that experience in Northern Ireland.

Dan Jarvis: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her intervention. She raises an important point. The truth is that veterans who suffer from PTSD often report the trauma that they experienced serving our country many years after. It seems to me, and I think that the public would completely agree, that as a country and a society we have a lifelong commitment to those people who stepped forward and served our country. We all understand the cost of that service, and we have a responsibility to look out for, and look after, those people for all their lives outside the armed forces.

I will end by reflecting on the fact that this Friday there will be a memorial service for a great comrade of mine—someone I served alongside in my regiment—who took his own life just a few weeks ago. The terrible problem of veteran suicide has never felt more real to me than it does right now. The fact that we, frankly, do not really understand the problem, or even its scale, has never concerned me more than it does today. My ask of the Government, and of the Minister, who I know takes these matters seriously, is a simple one: please give this issue the attention that it deserves, help us all to understand it better, and let us work together to address it.

4.54 pm

Peter Heaton-Jones (North Devon) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Henry, and to follow the excellent contribution of the hon. Member for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis). I congratulate the hon. Member for Portsmouth South (Stephen Morgan) on introducing this important debate. He represents a proud military and naval city. Indeed, my connection with this issue goes back to his city, because my first job on leaving university was working in Portsmouth on the Fratton Road at the then Radio Victory, which, as its name suggests, had proud connections with the military background of the city.

That was 34 years ago—I know that colleagues will find that difficult to believe. It was then that I, as a student straight out of university, started to learn about the difficulties military personnel face in proud cities such as Portsmouth, and how we as a society need to do more to help them. The hon. Gentleman's contribution illustrated that extraordinarily well.

I stand now, though, as the Member for North Devon, and I will proudly speak about the connections between our county and the armed services. Devon has the highest number of veterans as a proportion of its population of any county in the UK, and we are extraordinarily proud of that. An estimated 100,000 veterans live in Devon, many of them in my constituency, where we have a proud historical connection with the military.

North Devon is, first and foremost, home to Royal Marines Base Chivenor. I am delighted to say that, in the last few weeks, the Minister announced a reversal of the plan to close that base, so it will remain home to the Royal Marines and a number of other armed forces personnel. We are extremely pleased about that in North Devon. Until recently, we also had an Army base at Fremington. In addition, there is a military establishment at Instow, and Barnstaple is home to the Royal Wessex Yeomanry. So we have active serving personnel, as well as a large cohort of veterans.

Sadly, it is estimated that almost one in six of our veterans has complex mental health needs—an issue that will no doubt grow in importance in the coming years. Mental ill health often presents itself in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder, but—this is one of my main concerns—it is, in many cases, an invisible condition. Not only do we, the state and the Government need to take greater notice, but society needs to change its attitudes too. That is something in which I take a particular interest—an interest that ranges across not just our former armed forces personnel, but many others who live with mental ill health.

I welcomed the Defence Secretary's pledge last year to increase funding for armed forces mental health services to £220 million over the next decade. As we also heard last summer, NHS budgets across the board are increasing. That is a good start, but it all comes down to targeting. We need to be able to recognise those who need to receive that help and support, and we need to improve our understanding of the long-term impacts of active service and the changing nature of our veteran communities, which creates a further challenge.

As well as the work being done by the Government, an enormous amount of extraordinarily valuable work is being done by voluntary groups, charities and third-sector organisations. I will mention one in particular: the Veterans Charity, which is based in my constituency but does work very much across the country. Every May, the charity hosts an event called the "Forces March", which has so far raised nearly half a million pounds to help the very people the hon. Member for Portsmouth South is seeking to raise the profile of this afternoon.

I say to the Minister that I recognise that a lot of good work has already been done. We need to keep working on this, and we need, as a society, to talk with pride about the service of our veterans, recognising that we owe them all the help and support that they need because of the service they have given us.

4.58 pm

Luke Pollard (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op): I congratulate my fellow dockyard MP, my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth South (Stephen Morgan), on introducing the debate. There are certain parts of the United Kingdom in which the prevalence of our veterans is at its greatest. Plymouth has nearly 20,000 veterans; as the son of a submariner, I myself am the son of a veteran. It is important that we recognise that veterans are not uniformly spread throughout the country, and that support systems for them are much better in some parts of the country than others. In places such as Portsmouth and Plymouth, the armed forces covenant—that bond between the communities, veterans and those who serve—is not something that gathers dust on a shelf, but a living document which people live and breathe every day. In looking after our armed forces veterans, we need to engage with it much more.

We need to talk about men's mental health, because the vast majority of veterans who take their own life are men. Men are more likely to commit suicide than women but less likely to ask for help or get support. Those who have served face additional barriers and stigma when they try to access support.

I support the call that several hon. Members have made for data collection, because it is hard for us to come together without understanding the true extent of the problem. In localities such as Plymouth—I imagine that it happens in Portsmouth as well—we collect the data on a local level, but it is hard to know how it feeds into the wider national picture. Data collection is not simply about ticking a box to say that someone is a veteran—[*Interruption.*]

5 pm

Sitting suspended for Divisions in the House.

5.51 pm

On resuming—

Luke Pollard: I was talking about the scale of the problem of suicide, which affects men in particular. We must realise that, in many cases, suicide is the end of a process. Many veterans are caught in ruts of homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction, relationship breakdown or insecure work. We need not only to look at how we collect data about veteran suicide, but to understand the steps towards that, and equally, how we can get support to veterans when they need it most. It is right that veterans have access to and, in many cases, come to the front of the queue for mental health support, but when the queue is already months long, being at the front is no good at all. Huge steps forward need to be taken.

I know the Minister is passionate about this issue, and I believe sincerely that some good options have already come out of the debate. I look forward to hearing his response.

5.52 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Member for Portsmouth South (Stephen Morgan) on bringing forward the debate. I declare an interest: I was a member of the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Territorial Army for 14 and a half years.

I fully understand why veterans feel so out of kilter when they leave service and return to civvy street. I believe sincerely that we must do more to help smooth not simply their occupational transition, but their social transition. Robert McCartney, the chairman of Beyond the Battlefield—he and I have met the Minister—constantly raises awareness of veterans' daily struggle and of the need for more funding and support for those who have put their body and their mental health on the line for Queen and country. The fact is that they carry things they have seen with them for many years afterwards.

In a Belfast *News Letter* article just a few months ago, Robert McCartney said that 400 veterans attempt to take their own lives in Northern Ireland every year, and 30 of them actually do. He added that veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and associated suicidal thoughts often fall through gaps in the safety net provided by the NHS and service-related charities. He estimates that there are some 141,000 veterans in Northern Ireland, 12% of whom have some form of mental health problem. Some 10% of those who do—some 1,700—are currently in the health system. He said that leaves almost 9,000 veterans

“who have been, or currently are, in mental health services in Northern Ireland.”

A recent survey of 400 GPs in Belfast found that there are between 300 and 450 attempted suicides by veterans every year, and that 20 to 30 people actually take their lives. Unfortunately, coroners do not record that formally. Not all deaths related to service take the form of a culminating suicide episode; some fall into the realm of death by self-infliction—by alcohol, prescription drugs or non-prescription drugs. Although Northern Ireland makes up only 3% of the UK's population, it supplies 7% of its armed forces personnel. Some 15% of Northern Ireland personnel have been on the battlefield in the past 10 years.

Now more than ever, we need to put this matter on the frontline. The Minister has always been responsive, and I appreciate that very much. I thank him for meeting me and the chairman of Beyond the Battlefield. Supporting our veterans is as essential as providing education or free healthcare; it is an obligation, and it must be viewed as such. We should not provide support because of the feelgood factor; it has to be more than that. I again thank the hon. Member for Portsmouth South, and I look to the Minister for the response we need on behalf of our veterans.

5.55 pm

Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Henry.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth South (Stephen Morgan) on securing this debate and shining a light on this incredibly important issue. To be honest, it ought to shame us. The story of Dave Jukes is harrowing, and I am sure we all appreciate that it was probably not an isolated occurrence.

All those who serve our country make many sacrifices while defending our interests, and they deserve respect, support and fair treatment during and after their service. I thank all our armed forces personnel, past and present. I believe that how our veterans are treated should be a yardstick for what sort of society we are. My hon. Friend's point about the lack of data on veteran suicides is important in that respect. If we do not know the scale of the problem, how can we begin to address it?

[Justin Madders]

I would like to take this opportunity to make some practical suggestions about prevention. Like many hon. Members, I visit Veterans Day events in my constituency every year. In the light of this debate, I wonder whether the Minister could make a formal request for all NHS trusts to have a presence at such events, which are a clear opportunity to signpost mental health support. The general principle that NHS services ought to reach out and embed themselves in existing veterans services and events is a good one.

Last year, I visited the Veterans Garage project on the outskirts of Manchester, which plans to convert a world war two airport terminal building into a base for classic car and motorcycle restoration garages, alongside a coffee bar with food. The base provides support for veterans who are suffering from recent combat stress and gives them a place to meet other veterans. The project also provides mental health support, and the garage equips people with skills to increase their employability. Crucially, it is rolling out a full advice service on a whole range of issues and has a counsellor with specific experience with PTSD on site. That is exactly the sort of embedded service I believe we need to see more of.

I know that time is short, so let me conclude by saying that we can and should do more. Those who serve our country deserve the very best support.

Sir Henry Bellingham (in the Chair): Thank you very much indeed for being so brief. I call Emma Hardy.

5.57 pm

Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Henry. I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth South (Stephen Morgan) on securing this important debate.

Since my election, I have been pleased to attend the veterans Saturday club at the Marquis of Granby pub in Hessle. I have found the people there to be very warm, very welcoming, very robust, very opinionated, very challenging and very honest about the challenges they have faced since leaving the armed forces. In the brief time I have, I would like to mention the wives and husbands of those veterans. Care and support for them sometimes goes missing, but they, too, find it incredibly challenging when people return from service and face significant problems adapting to life outside the armed forces. Will the Minister talk about what support can be offered to veterans' families?

Let me briefly mention an incredible man called Steve, who runs the Hull Veterans Support Centre. He is one of the unsung heroes of Hull. He is an incredible man. He is a veteran himself and is described as a father figure to so many veterans in Hull. He has given so much, at such great personal cost. He is also a cancer survivor, but that has not stopped him going out there to support veterans in Hull with accommodation and getting to appointments. He is changing people's lives on the ground. I also pay tribute to Paul, who runs Hull 4 Heroes, and to that organisation for everything it does to support veterans to get back to some sort of normal life after life in service.

We need respect for veterans, but respect alone is not enough; warm words alone are not enough. I echo hon. Members' calls for veterans to have access to Ministry of Defence mental health services for more than 12 months, because that is simply not long enough. I also call for those services to be made available to wives, husbands, children and the rest of the family.

5.59 pm

Melanie Onn (Great Grimsby) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth South (Stephen Morgan) on securing this important debate. I start by paying tribute to Irene Dennis, who runs the Grimsby breakfast club on Sunday mornings for those who are still in service and those who have been previously to reminisce, share and support one another. I am also pleased to mention Steve Baxter, a Grimsby man who was in the forces and has seen four friends die as a result of PTSD. He told his story clearly and movingly in the *Grimsby Telegraph*. That prompted him to set up the Veterans Still Serving group to support those suffering from PTSD.

North East Lincolnshire is a proud armed forces covenant borough. The former mayor and councillor Alex Baxter now co-ordinates our very successful armed forces weekend, which attracts families from across the country to show their backing for our armed services personnel, past and present.

I was prompted to speak today because of the impact of serving on my constituent Steven Sampher; I have had extensive correspondence with the Minister on this particular case. He is a remarkable man who, frankly, has been going through hell trying to work his way through the armed forces compensation scheme. He has been kept dangling about whether he is still employed, and he worries about the support for his family in the future.

I am concerned, as my written questions show, that the stress of going through this process, on top of his post-traumatic stress disorder and extreme pain, and now phantom pain as a result of his amputated leg, has been extremely trying for Steven and his family. Should the Government not do more to properly support veterans going through that process, to ensure that they get the compensation that they are entitled to, in full accordance with the injuries that they have sustained in the course of their service?

Finally, I will quickly mention homelessness among veterans. Unless we sort that out, the number of veterans committing suicide will increase.

Sir Henry Bellingham (in the Chair): Thank you very much indeed for being so concise. I call Paul Sweeney, who has exactly two minutes.

6.1 pm

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): Thank you for calling me to speak in this critical debate on our national life, Sir Henry. I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth South (Stephen Morgan) for speaking so touchingly and movingly about the cases he has had to deal with and the impacts they have had.

I will speak from my personal experience of friends who have served in the Army and how they have been affected. I have spoken about this issue several times in the last few months, because many of my friends and

people I know have been affected. Indeed we lost four Jocks from the Royal Regiment of Scotland in July and August last year through a terrible spate of suicides. We really worried about what that meant. Reflecting further, more than 70 veterans have taken their own lives in the last year, which is really worrying. The death toll exceeded the number of battlefield fatalities in 11 of the 13 years that British forces were operational in Herrick in Afghanistan. It is a worrying rate.

More than a third of those who took their lives in 2018 whose details are known had suffered from PTSD, so it is clearly something we need to deal with. I spoke to Combat Stress about the issue and most worryingly, many of those people—particularly those in the Royal Regiment of Scotland—had identified themselves. One of the men who tragically took his life, Jamie Davis, had been recording video diaries of his experiences, which are particularly haunting to watch in the light of what happened and knowing that he ended up taking his own life. The descriptions of the difficulties that he encountered are harrowing, but they are not unfamiliar from what we have heard in the debate.

It is critical that we now recognise the urgency of the situation. More than 100,000 people have served in Iraq and Afghanistan in the last decade. This is not about veterans of the world war two generation, but about people in my peer group—people in their 30s and 40s—who served in those theatres and have suffered terribly as a result of losing their friends. I think about some of my friends I lost in Afghanistan, and I recognise the impact that that can have. This is critical, and the care review and the mental health review that the Ministry of Defence suggests do not go far enough. We need more grip around this, we need a proper casework service, and we need proper and more robust engagement as a matter of urgency.

Sir Henry Bellingham (in the Chair): I am grateful to colleagues for showing restraint and being so concise, and also for making very moving contributions.

6.3 pm

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Henry. I thank and congratulate the hon. Member for Portsmouth South (Stephen Morgan) on bringing this crucial debate, and on speaking so eloquently and poignantly of the harrowing tale of our services' failure of his constituent, who continually reached out for help, only to find that it was not there when he most needed it.

We heard that 50 veterans took their life in the last year, but that that is probably an underestimate of the impact on our veterans; clearer data is needed. I have to say again that any veteran who is at the point of harming themselves or who takes their own life is a failure of our system. Much more must be done to address that.

I thank all hon. Members who took part, and I cannot help but notice that there is such vast experience on this issue in the House, including among those who have served themselves; those who have supported the care of those who served, through their work in the NHS and other services; and those who are supporting their constituents with mental health issues. Men's mental

health was raised again, and that is especially important. We cannot raise that enough. We must reduce stigma and ensure that people feel able to come forward and access services when required.

I declare an interest, in that my husband served in the armed forces in the Corps of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, including in Bosnia, and he suffered a head injury during his service that still affects him to this day. We know as a family how crucial it is that support is there for people when they need it at the point of leaving the armed forces and coming into civvy street. It is very difficult to adjust and gain understanding from those who have never served, so, as has been said, services must be bespoke and involve those who understand what it is to serve, putting themselves and their families' future on the line at the same time.

I do not often pay tribute to my husband, but I will do so today. He has adjusted and now he has been elected as a councillor in South Lanarkshire. I am proud to say that he is our veterans' champion. He wants to give back as much as possible to those who have come through the service. I also pay tribute to Veterans First Point in Lanarkshire and ask hon. Members please to sign early-day motion 1985, which pays tribute to the bespoke services it provides to veterans locally. It was launched in Lanarkshire in 2016 and so far has helped 400-plus veterans in aspects of welfare, housing and mental and physical healthcare. Access to psychology support by those specialist in this area is crucial, and I pay tribute to all those working in Veterans First Point across Scotland, in SSAFA, in Combat Stress and in all the other organisations we need to provide the care that is required.

Veterans First Point provides a tailored, bespoke service. Where there is such best practice, will the Minister try to look at it across the United Kingdom, work with other organisations and ensure that it is rolled out in all areas, so that there is not a postcode lottery, in which particular veterans fall through the net? We cannot allow that to happen. We have heard that the figures provide an underestimate, so it is crucial that we have better data. What can be done to take that forward timeously to ensure that we are doing all we can?

We know that PTSD develops over time; indeed, part of the diagnosis is that symptoms continue for more than six months. Services therefore need to be available past the 12-month period, up to a number of years, because often people do not develop symptoms until many years after they have left the armed forces.

The Scottish Government have a Scottish Veterans Commissioner to ensure that veterans never face disadvantage, with a remit to improve outcomes for all veterans. Local councils and health boards also have veterans' champions, as I have mentioned.

I thank everyone for taking part in this cross-party debate, which we all feel very strongly about. We must give priority to our veterans and ensure that we do not fail them, as they have put their lives on the line for us.

6.8 pm

Gerald Jones (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab): What a pleasure it is to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Henry. I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth South (Stephen Morgan) on securing the debate on an extremely serious matter and

[Gerald Jones]

delivering a thoughtful, compassionate speech in which he outlined the circumstances of his constituent, David Jukes, and his experience of a multitude of failures. There is obviously a need for more to be done to support veterans' mental health.

Time does not permit me to go into the detail of the various speeches we have heard this afternoon, but I add to the comments of others and thank all those who have contributed—namely, my hon. Friends the Members for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis), for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard), for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders), for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle (Emma Hardy), for Great Grimsby (Melanie Onn) and for Glasgow North East (Mr Sweeney), and the hon. Members for North Devon (Peter Heaton-Jones) and for Strangford (Jim Shannon). I think that covers everybody. They all made passionate speeches, bringing their own experience to the debate.

The vast majority of ex-service personnel, as we know, have good mental health, but as we have heard from several hon. Members today, and as I have experienced in my constituency, there are challenges for too many people and heartbreaking cases such as those we have heard about, where veterans choose to take their own lives. We know there are no comprehensive figures for veteran suicides in the UK, as coroners are not required to record whether the deceased was a veteran. The Defence Committee has rightly recognised that collating and recording that data would enable the Government to identify whether there are particular groups of veterans or particular locations where more effort is required to prevent such tragic events from occurring. Will the Government consider ensuring that coroners record that important data, which would allow more targeted and necessary interventions?

Despite the lack of official data, veterans' organisations and campaigners have estimated that 58 veterans took their own life last year, at least one third having suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. We can all imagine that the actual figures must be much higher. While veterans' organisations offer much-needed aid to veterans who are struggling—I pay particular tribute to the group All Call Signs, which is represented here today—many others, such as Combat Stress, have admitted they are finding it difficult to cope on their own.

The Government have put money into this area recently, but it is not just about money. A recent Defence Committee report recognises:

“Despite...improvements, there is no doubt that some serving personnel, veterans and their families who need mental health care are still being completely failed by the system”,

as in the case that my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth South highlighted from his constituency. What thinking has there been in the Government about establishing a cohesive, joined-up strategy to deal with this huge challenge? Will the Government commit to implementing in full the recommendations in the Defence Committee report?

It is fair to say that our armed forces are known throughout the world for their skill, their renowned training capabilities, and the fact that they are highly skilled soldiers, sailors, and airmen and women. However, the Government do not always apply the same vigour to helping servicemen and women to transition back into

civilian life. While many service personnel make that transition successfully, some none the less encounter serious problems, and there is growing evidence that that is the case.

According to a recent report by the armed forces charity SSAFA, 77% of veterans polled, all of whom had sought help from the charity, said that they felt they were not fully prepared for civilian life, with 19% saying that the resettlement package failed to provide them with suitable skills or qualifications to find a job. What efforts are the Government making to improve transition to civilian life, given some of the issues that we have heard about today relating to mental health and homelessness, and the whole package to aid that transition?

Finally, it is important that we recognise, as some hon. Members have already done in the debate, the impact on veterans' families. Recent research by the Forces in Mind Trust found that greater awareness is needed of the challenges that families face, and the Royal British Legion has said that armed forces families have specific mental health needs. I ask the Minister to clarify that. This is a sensitive issue, as we are all aware, but I am sure we all agree that it is one that needs further support, so I look forward to the Minister's response.

Sir Henry Bellingham (in the Chair): Many thanks for being so brief. I now call the Minister, and I would be grateful if he could try to finish by 6.21 pm.

6.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Tobias Ellwood): I fear 6.21 pm does not leave enough time to do justice to what has been an incredibly important debate. It is a real honour and a privilege to speak on behalf of the Government on such a critical issue, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Portsmouth South (Stephen Morgan) on raising it. We can see from the number of hon. Members who are present and have contributed why it is important that we get this right.

There has been, I think, a modicum of consensus—certainly more in this debating chamber than the one we just came from, having been interrupted by the Division bell. I hope I can express the feeling in Westminster Hall by saying to all those veterans, “Thank you very much for your service; the nation is truly grateful.” I also thank those who endeavour to provide support to those veterans and their families. It is an indication of the society we are that we look after those people not only when they are in uniform, but once they retire.

I have scribbled a lot of notes, but I suffer from the fact that I now cannot read my handwriting. I will do my best to answer hon. Members' important questions. There were some themes that developed. As always, I will write to hon. Members with more detail in response to the points they raised.

We are all familiar with individual stories. I am very sorry to hear about what happened to David Jonathon Jukes. It is a stark reminder of what happens when the machine does not work and we do not do what we can. The hon. Member for Portsmouth South is right to point out that 15,000 armed forces personnel leave every single year. I am pleased to say that the majority—more than 90%—are in education or back in employment, if they have done our transition course, within six months

of departure. That is great news, but some require support. That support must be very visible and we must communicate it to our veterans, so that they know where it may be found.

For many of those who attempt suicide or, tragically, take their life, it is normally an accumulation of things that have gone wrong. It might be homelessness, mental health or other aspects of their life. We need to work out what those points are. We need to collect data; that was a recurring theme in the debate. I want that and we are working on it. As hon. Members will be aware, the coroners are fiercely independent. I cannot just tell them to collect that data. We are looking at ways that we can collate the information in order to understand better what is going on. We are also working with the NHS and are looking at programmes. We are fully aware that data will help us to understand this problem better and to move forward.

A lot of the issue is to do with stigma. It is difficult for people in the armed forces to say that there is anything wrong with them. Certainly, when I served, we were reluctant to do it. We were fearful of what it would do to our promotional opportunities—particularly if it had anything to do with mental health. We are changing that through our mental health strategy. We are getting people to recognise that if they have got something wrong with their mind and sort themselves out early, they can get back to the frontline and do what they love best: soldiering.

The consequence of that is that more people are stepping forward, either during their armed forces period or afterwards. That has put pressure on the system. Much as I want us to have money for operations and training—we have the spending review coming up, and I hope the Chancellor is watching this debate with interest—we recognise that we need funding for greater support mechanisms that need to be there for our armed forces and veterans.

Sir Mark Hendrick: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Ellwood: I will give way only once, because I am already down to four minutes.

Sir Mark Hendrick: The Minister said he cannot force coroners to do things, but the Government can legislate to ensure that the data is collected so that cause and effect can be seen. Just talking about the circumstances somebody is living in at any one moment in time does not take account of the fact that they served in the Army.

Mr Ellwood: We can go down that road, but it will take time, and I want to get there faster. I want that data; I want to understand what is going on. The hon. Gentleman makes an absolutely valid point.

The Government are taking this seriously. We now have a Minister with responsibility for suicide prevention. The Department of Health and Social Care has a national suicide prevention strategy. There is also NHS England's veterans' mental health transition, intervention and liaison service, which is a really important stepping stone from serving to civilian life. Every NHS should now have a TIL operation in place. I have seen one in St Pancras—it is a fantastic outfit. However, veterans need to know it is there so they can get the attention that they

need. There is a complex treatment process to look after those with more complex needs. We touched on the need for GPs to understand what is going on better. We are now training GPs to be more aware of asking the question, "Are you a veteran?" which is critical in realising what the diagnosis might be. Clearly, more work needs to be done.

My hon. Friend the Member for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich (Dr Poulter), a former Health Minister, outlined the issue. I stress so much that just because somebody served in the armed forces does not mean that the suicide was caused by being in the armed forces. We need to make that very clear indeed. He stressed that people who have served are less likely to take their life than their civilian peers. Every suicide is a tragedy, and every effort must be made to get those numbers down.

My hon. Friend referred to a study from after the Gulf war. We are doing the same with Iraq and Afghanistan, to better understand, keep track of and recognise the concerns, and to be there to help those who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. If there is a cohort of people that I am concerned about, it is those who served around the time of the Falklands war. They are stoic and still have that stigma—not wanting to put their hand up. They were not told prior to leaving where help might be found. The Veterans' Gateway is a fantastic online portal showing where help can be found to provide the support that is needed. That is the cohort I am most concerned about, and that is what we need to work on.

My hon. Friend also mentioned Professor Simon Wessely and the work we are doing with the Royal Foundation. Studies are taking place, and part of our veterans strategy looks at that. Suicide prevention is a core aspect of what we want to do over the next 10 years.

My comrade, the hon. Member for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis), talked of the cost of combat, as well as of how PTSD can incubate. We need to recognise when it might come on—it may be quite some time after they have departed the armed forces.

My hon. Friend the Member for North Devon (Peter Heaton-Jones)—I would be delighted to visit Chivenor, and I am pleased that it is being retained—talked about the fact that one sixth of veterans may have some kind of complex health needs. I would add that one third of us—the whole of society needs to recognise this—will suffer a mental health challenge in our lifetime. As a society, we are still reluctant to talk about that. The armed forces are the worst, because of that stigma and that unwillingness to step forward. However, that is changing.

I am conscious that I have almost run out of time. I will write to hon. Members with more details. I apologise for not being able to answer all the points that were raised. I remain committed to looking at this. The changes that we have seen to date are good, but more needs to happen. Data is critical. If hon. Members can write to the Chancellor and ask him to recognise that more funding is needed here, because more people are stepping forward and saying, "It's okay, because I'm not okay—let's fix me." We need to take them on board. Let us all work together to make that happen.

Sir Henry Bellingham (in the Chair): I am sorry that there is no time for the hon. Member for Portsmouth South to wind up, because a number of colleagues wanted to speak.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered veteran suicide.

6.22 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Statements

Wednesday 3 April 2019

EDUCATION

Education Technology Strategy

The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Chris Skidmore): Education technology (EdTech) refers to the practice of using technology to support teaching and the effective day-to-day running of education institutions. Technology has become embedded throughout society and yet the use of technology in education is mixed. There is potential for technology to play a stronger role in helping to address some of the key challenges in education.

The Department for Education has developed an education technology strategy “Realising the potential of technology in Education: A strategy for education providers and the technology sector”. The strategy aims to support and enable the education sector in England to help develop and embed technology in a way that cuts workload, fosters efficiencies, removes barriers to education and ultimately drives improvements in education outcomes. It includes support to promote a vibrant EdTech business sector in the UK to provide proven, high-quality products that meet the needs of educators and fosters a pipeline of fresh ideas.

At the core of the strategy is an understanding that the use of technology does not provide a panacea, but when used well, it can be highly effective in helping to deliver improvements and tackle challenges throughout education. The strategy marks the development of a partnership between the education sector, the technology industry and the Government to drive further progress in the use of education technology for schools, further education, higher education and other providers and announces a new leadership group to take this forward.

The strategy makes clear how we intend to build upon existing good practice in the sector through launching a network of EdTech demonstrator schools and colleges across the country. The demonstrator schools and colleges will help showcase the possibilities for technology and will facilitate peer-to-peer learning about the good use of technology to help address challenges facing teachers, leaders and students, be this funding, teacher workloads, meeting the needs of pupils with special needs or more generally to help support teachers to deliver excellent teaching.

It also makes clear that Government will help address the barriers facing education providers and the technology industry, through:

Helping schools to secure the broadband and networking infrastructure they need through accelerating the roll-out of full fibre internet connectivity to schools and providing guidance.

Supporting the creation of opportunities for teachers and school leaders to improve their skills and knowledge about good use of technology through creating opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and through supporting partner organisations to provide free online CPD courses and free nationwide roadshows showcasing products, services and good practice.

Improving support for procurement of technology, including exploring how to facilitate a better online marketplace for EdTech including through pre-negotiated buying deals, and supporting a digital service allowing schools to try products before they buy.

Helping education providers and the technology industry understand the privacy, security and data guidance and standards they should adhere to.

Helping the education technology industry to understand the full range of support available to them to help grow and scale their business through the Government’s industrial strategy.

Improving the digital services that the Department for Education itself provides.

The strategy also announces 10 challenges to educationists and the technology industry. These cover areas where we think there is real potential for technology to make a difference and where we are seeking to galvanise activity, promote innovation and to prove whether or not technology has the potential to deliver positive outcomes. This includes the use of technology in assessment, administration, learning throughout life, teaching practice and continuing professional development. We will deliver the challenges through research, competitions to promote innovation by industry and the development of test bed schools and colleges.

This strategy marks the start of creating a technology revolution in education in England. We know that delivering this vision will take time, but we are committed to working in partnership with education and industry to deliver this vision.

I will deposit a copy of the strategy in the Libraries of both Houses.

[HCWS1478]

HOME DEPARTMENT

Windrush Compensation Scheme

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid): I have today announced the details of the Windrush compensation scheme. The Government deeply regret what has happened to some members of the Windrush generation and when I became Home Secretary I made clear that responding to this was a priority. The compensation scheme being launched today is a key part of righting the wrongs experienced by some members of the Windrush generation, under successive Governments.

A public consultation opened on 19 July 2018 seeking views on proposals for a Windrush compensation scheme. Since the consultation closed on 16 November, careful consideration has been given to the 1,435 responses that were received from people and organisations, as well as the feedback from the focus groups. These views have been considered in addition to the 650 responses to the call for evidence which preceded the consultation. Martin Forde QC, who was appointed to give independent advice on the compensation scheme, has attended events across the country to hear the stories of those affected, and his findings have contributed to the final design. I would like to extend particular thanks to Martin: I have met him to discuss his views on the scheme and his advice has been invaluable.

The Government have listened carefully and I believe the proposals are in line with what the majority of respondents wanted to see in the scheme. I am pleased that Martin has concluded the scheme is accessible and

fairly compensates those who have suffered. The scheme will ensure that those who have been affected are able to claim for the losses they faced and receive appropriate compensation. It is important that the scheme works well for those who have suffered a loss, so we are making it accessible and fair, with guidance available to help people understand what compensation they might be entitled to and how they submit a claim.

Detailed information about the compensation scheme, with the forms and guidance that people need to make a claim, are available from today online at: www.gov.uk/windrush-compensation. Our free phone helpline is also open now 0800 678 1925 for those wishing to receive printed copies of the claim form or for any other queries. Copies of the response to the consultation (CP 81) are available from the Vote Office and will also be online at: www.gov.uk.

The Home Office is committed to raising awareness of the scheme, and to encouraging eligible people of all nationalities to submit a claim. Eligibility for compensation goes beyond members of the Caribbean Commonwealth, and we are putting in place a programme of events with key stakeholders, faith and community organisations to communicate the detail of the scheme and give everyone who is potentially eligible, the opportunity to hear about the scheme and to apply.

I would again like to thank all those who responded to the consultation and who took part in the wider engagement during the development of the scheme. The views and experiences that have been shared have proved crucial in shaping the Government's policy, ensuring it addresses the matters raised by those affected.

[HCWS1481]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Trade Advisory Groups

The Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade (Dr Liam Fox): The Department for International Trade's (DIT) has ensured that creating an open and transparent trade policy is at the heart of its mission for an inclusive trade agenda that maximises benefit for the whole of the UK. We recognise that transparency is fundamental to better outcomes.

As part of this approach the Government have created the Strategic Trade Advisory Group (STAG) to seek informed views on relevant trade policy matters. The group will be composed of 16 core members from business to trade unions, consumer groups to non-governmental organisations (NGOs). It will be chaired by the Minister for Trade Policy, alongside a co-chair from the STAG. Membership of the group has been designed to represent a diverse range of interest and expertise from across the UK, allowing the Government to harness advice, insight and evidence from a wide range of experienced voices already actively involved in trade issues.

The full list of seats includes:

<i>Category</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Organisations/Area</i>
Academia	Prof. Holger Breinlich	University of Surrey
Business Representative Organisation	Carolyn Fairbairn	Confederation of British Industry
Consumers (Standards)	Dr.Scott Steedman CBE	British Standards Institution
Consumers	Caroline Normand	Which?
Developmental Organisation	Dr. Dirk Willem te Velde	Overseas Development Institute
New Entrant Business	Mark Abrams	Trade Finance Global
Non-governmental Organisations	Michael Gidney	Fair Trade Foundation
Northern Ireland Business	Nick Coburn CBE	Ulster Carpets Group
Regional Business	Denise Valin Alvarez	Burberry
Scottish Business	Liz Cameron OBE	Scottish Chambers of Commerce
Services	Gary Campkin	City UK
Small and Medium Enterprise	Sean Ramsden	Ramsden International
Small and Medium Enterprise (Business Representative Organisations)	Mike Cherry OBE	Federation of Small Business
Think Tank	Sam Lowe	Centre for European Reform
Trade Unions	Paul Nowak	Trade Union Congress
Welsh Business	Prys Morgan	Kepak Group Limited

Members of the group were recruited through an open call for expressions of interest which ran from 18 July to 17 August 2018 followed by a two stage sift process against the published membership criteria. The selection process followed best practice principles to ensure a fair and transparent approach.

As part of DIT's ongoing commitment to transparency on trade issues, we will make dates of meetings, agendas and a summary of discussions publicly available.

The groups will have an advisory function only and will be one part of the wider engagement structure the Government are putting in place to gather insight and intelligence from stakeholders.

Another key component of our engagement infrastructure is cross-government Expert Trade Advisory Groups (ETAGs), which are being set up to facilitate expert technical policy exchanges on specific sector and thematic policy areas. Membership of the groups will vary according to the sector or policy area but will comprise relevant experts from the fields of academia, regulation, business and civil society.

We are committed to seeking views from the widest range of stakeholder groups. In addition to the above formal structures we will continue to use a variety of mechanisms and engagement structures to ensure that our trade policy works for the whole of the UK.

[HCWS1480]

TRANSPORT

EU Transport Council

The Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Grayling):

The Romanian presidency hosted an informal meeting of Transport Ministers in Bucharest on Wednesday 27 March. This was not a formal Council meeting and no decisions were taken. This statement provides a summary of discussions. The UK was represented by officials.

The meeting discussed multimodality, sustainability, infrastructure and road safety. On multimodality, participants underlined the importance of developing a comprehensive approach to multimodal transport. Integrated ticketing systems, promotion of car-sharing or public transport, digitalisation and interoperability were identified as means for developing multimodality.

On sustainability, participants discussed the importance of action to reduce the impact of transport on climate change, recognising the challenges raised by an increasing need for mobility and the negative impact on the climate. Policy and practical approaches to encouraging multimodal transport were discussed, with many interventions focusing on possible measures to be taken in order to decarbonise

transport such as: promotion of alternative fuels, digitalisation, better planning of services, uptake of new technologies, and incentives for use of public transport or cycling.

The Commission set out its thinking on the revision of the TEN-T regulation, following the launch of its review process in March, and its plans for consultation with stakeholders and member states in the next few months. Participants welcomed the Commission's initiative to start the revision process of the TEN-T regulation and discussed future funding options for the promotion of priority projects.

Over lunch the meeting heard some presentations on road safety. The European Commission stressed the importance of member states implementing the "Vision zero" to reduce fatalities and severe injuries on roads. The European Commission will be seeking to re-focus its efforts in this area by introducing a new policy framework on road safety for 2021-30. In addition, it will seek to foster a partnership with the European Investment Bank to provide the "Safer Transport Facility" with the aim of providing a "one stop shop" to support member states in achieving the objective.

The UK did not intervene substantively.

[HCWS1479]

Petition

Wednesday 3 April 2019

PRESENTED PETITION

Petition presented to the House but not read on the Floor

Patient consent for changes to consent forms for operations

The Petition of Mr Anthony Sheppard

Declares that Mr Sheppard was scheduled for Mr Jain to perform an operation on his knee at Solihull Hospital on 18th February 2014; further declares that he attended the hospital and signed a consent form in the ward at around noon; further declares that he was sent for at 1.45 pm and arrived in the operating theatre reception at 1.50 pm; further declares that while the anaesthetist was at the point of administering a general anaesthetic a different doctor (Mr Gajula) came in and said that changes were needed to the consent form because Mr Jain would not be performing the operation and there was a risk of breaking his leg; further declares that Mr Gajula made alterations to the consent form and initialled them; further declares that Mr Sheppard became upset, nevertheless, the general anaesthetic was administered and the operation was performed without Mr Sheppard being asked to confirm his consent by initialling the changes to the consent form; and further declares that the events stated above were established as 'common ground' by the judge in the civil case;

Further declares that Mr Sheppard has since taken this case both to the GMC, from the GMC to judicial review and then to the court of appeal; further declares that Mr Sheppard has also taken the case through the civil courts, and through the court of appeal to the European Court of Human Rights; further declares that, notwithstanding the fact that Mr Sheppard did not consent to the changes to the consent form and that the doctors contravened the regulations of the hospital which require patients to initial changes rather than doctors otherwise they leave themselves open to criminal charges, the court found for the Defendant, who had claimed that no further consent was required after Mr Sheppard signed the original unmodified consent form; and further declares that the judge in judicial review held that Parliament had given the GMC the authority to choose which cases to investigate and had discretion to ignore the case.

The petitioner therefore requests that this petition be referred both to the Health Select Committee and the Joint Committee on Human Rights for a review as to whether the law should be changed to provide protection to patients so that written consent is required from a patient with capacity before an operation proceeds with an amended consent form; and further asks the House of Commons to refer this petition to those members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe with a view for them to refer it to the appropriate committees of that assembly in respect of Articles 3 and 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights.

And the petitioner remains, etc.—[*Presented by Tim Farron .*]
[P002447]

Ministerial Correction

Wednesday 3 April 2019

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Topical Questions

The following is an extract from Foreign and Commonwealth Office Topical Questions on Tuesday 2 April 2019.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): How does ignoring or dismissing the International Court of Justice ruling on the Chagos islands enhance the United Kingdom's reputation as a soft power superpower or uphold the international rules-based order?

Sir Alan Duncan: First, it was not a ruling; it was an intermediate decision and non-binding. We are of course in discussions with Mauritius, but we fully uphold our right to take the position we have taken over many years.

[Official Report, 2 April 2019, Vol. 657, c. 933.]

Letter of correction from the Minister for Europe and the Americas, the right hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Sir Alan Duncan):

An error has been identified in the response I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady).

The correct response should have been:

Sir Alan Duncan: First, it was not a ruling; it was **an advisory opinion** and non-binding. We are of course in discussions with Mauritius, but we fully uphold our right to take the position we have taken over many years.

ORAL ANSWERS

Wednesday 3 April 2019

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
PRIME MINISTER	1022	WALES—continued	
Engagements	1022	Leaving the EU: Discussions with	
		First Minister of Wales	1013
WALES	1013	Prince of Wales's Investiture Regalia: Permanent	
Foreign Direct Investment	1018	Home	1020
Industrial Strategy	1020	UK Shared Prosperity Fund	1016
Infrastructure Resilience	1019	Universal Credit: Low-income Families	1021

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Wednesday 3 April 2019

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
EDUCATION	41WS	INTERNATIONAL TRADE	43WS
Education Technology Strategy	41WS	Trade Advisory Groups	43WS
HOME DEPARTMENT	42WS	TRANSPORT	45WS
Windrush Compensation Scheme	42WS	EU Transport Council	45WS

PETITION

Wednesday 3 April 2019

	<i>Col. No.</i>	<i>Col. No.</i>
PRESENTED PETITION	7P	
Patient consent for changes to consent forms for		
operations	7P	

MINISTERIAL CORRECTION

Wednesday 3 April 2019

	<i>Col. No.</i>
FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE	7MC
Topical Questions	7MC

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CONTENTS

Wednesday 3 April 2019

Oral Answers to Questions [Col. 1013] [see index inside back page]

Secretary of State for Wales
Prime Minister

Windrush Compensation Scheme [Col. 1044]

Statement—(Sajid Javid)

Employment Rights (Shared Parental Leave and Flexible Working) [Col. 1054]

Bill presented, and read the First time

Animals (Recognition of Sentience) [Col. 1055]

Motion for leave to bring in Bill—(Kerry McCarthy)—agreed to
Bill presented, and read the First time

Business of the House [Col. 1058]

Motion—(Sir Oliver Letwin)
Amendment—(Hilary Benn)—on a Division, negatived
Motion, on a Division, agreed to

European Union (Withdrawal) (No. 5) Bill [Col. 1128]

Motion for Second Reading—(Yvette Cooper)—on a Division, agreed to
Considered in Committee; as amended, considered, read the Third time and passed

Petition [Col. 1218]

Packaging: Extended Producer Responsibility [Col. 1219]

Debate on motion for Adjournment

Westminster Hall

Votes at 16 [Col. 375WH]
Children's Social Care Services: Stoke-on-Trent [Col. 401WH]
Infant First Aid Training for Parents [Col. 409WH]
Non-stun Slaughter of Animals [Col. 430WH]
Veteran Suicide [Col. 439WH]
General Debates

Written Statements [Col. 41WS]

Ministerial Correction [Col. 7MC]

Petition [Col. 7P]

Not presented on the Floor

Written Answers to Questions [The written answers can now be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers>]
