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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

OFFICIAL REPORT

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Queen's Speech.....	5
Retirements of Members <i>Announcement</i>	7
Select Vestries Bill <i>First Reading</i>	7
Queen's Speech <i>Debate (1st Day)</i>	8
Chairman of Committees.....	26
Principal Deputy Chairman of Committees.....	27

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Abbreviation	Party/Group
CB	Cross Bench
Con	Conservative
Con Ind	Conservative Independent
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GP	Green Party
Ind Lab	Independent Labour
Ind LD	Independent Liberal Democrat
Ind SD	Independent Social Democrat
Lab	Labour
Lab Ind	Labour Independent
LD	Liberal Democrat
LD Ind	Liberal Democrat Independent
Non-afl	Non-affiliated
PC	Plaid Cymru
UKIP	UK Independence Party
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

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House of Lords

Wednesday, 27 May 2015.

Queen's Speech

11.30 am

The Queen, seated on the Throne and attended by Her Officers of State, commanded that the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod should let the Commons know that it was Her Majesty's pleasure that they attend Her immediately in this House.

When they had come with their Speaker, Her Majesty was pleased to speak as follows:

"My Lords and Members of the House of Commons, my Government will legislate in the interests of everyone in our country. They will adopt a one-nation approach, helping working people get on, supporting aspiration, giving new opportunities to the most disadvantaged and bringing different parts of our country together.

My Government will continue with their long-term plan to provide economic stability and security at every stage of life. They will continue the work of bringing the public finances under control and reducing the deficit, so Britain lives within its means. Measures will be introduced to raise the productive potential of the economy and increase living standards.

Legislation will be brought forward to help achieve full employment and provide more people with the security of a job. New duties will require my Ministers to report annually on job creation and apprenticeships. Measures will also be introduced to reduce regulation on small businesses so they can create jobs.

Legislation will be brought forward to ensure people working 30 hours a week on the national minimum wage do not pay income tax, and to ensure there are no rises in income tax rates, value added tax or national insurance for the next five years.

Measures will be brought forward to help working people by greatly increasing the provision of free childcare.

Legislation will be introduced to support home ownership and give housing association tenants the chance to own their own home.

Measures will be introduced to increase energy security and to control immigration. My Government will bring forward legislation to reform trade unions and to protect essential public services against strikes.

To give new opportunities to the most disadvantaged, my Government will expand the Troubled Families programme and continue to reform welfare, with legislation encouraging employment by capping benefits and requiring young people to earn or learn.

Legislation will be brought forward to improve schools and give every child the best start in life, with new powers to take over failing and coasting schools and create more academies.

In England, my Government will secure the future of the National Health Service by implementing the National Health Service's own five-year plan, by increasing

the health budget, integrating healthcare and social care, and ensuring the National Health Service works on a seven-day basis. Measures will be introduced to improve access to general practitioners and to mental health care.

Measures will also be brought forward to secure the real value of the basic state pension, so that more people live in dignity and security in retirement. Measures will be brought forward to increase the rights of victims of crime.

To bring different parts of our country together, my Government will work to bring about a balanced economic recovery. Legislation will be introduced to provide for the devolution of powers to cities with elected metro mayors, helping to build a northern powerhouse.

My Government will continue to legislate for high-speed rail links between the different parts of the country.

My Government will also bring forward legislation to secure a strong and lasting constitutional settlement, devolving wide-ranging powers to Scotland and Wales. Legislation will be taken forward giving effect to the Stormont House Agreement in Northern Ireland.

My Government will continue to work in co-operation with the devolved Administrations on the basis of mutual respect.

My Government will bring forward changes to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. These changes will create fairer procedures to ensure that decisions affecting England, or England and Wales, can be taken only with the consent of the majority of Members of Parliament representing constituencies in those parts of our United Kingdom.

My Government will renegotiate the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union and pursue reform of the European Union for the benefit of all member states. Alongside this, early legislation will be introduced to provide for an in/out referendum on membership of the European Union before the end of 2017.

Measures will also be brought forward to promote social cohesion and protect people by tackling extremism. New legislation will modernise the law on communications data, improve the law on policing and criminal justice, and ban the new generation of psychoactive drugs.

My Government will bring forward proposals for a British Bill of Rights.

Members of the House of Commons, estimates for the public services will be laid before you.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons, my Government will continue to play a leading role in global affairs, using their presence all over the world to re-engage with and tackle the major international security, economic and humanitarian challenges.

My Ministers will remain at the forefront of the NATO alliance and of international efforts to degrade and ultimately defeat terrorism in the Middle East.

The United Kingdom will continue to seek a political settlement in Syria, and will offer further support to the Iraqi Government's programme for political reform and national reconciliation.

My Government will maintain pressure on Russia to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, and will insist on the full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

My Government look forward to an enhanced partnership with India and China.

Prince Philip and I look forward to our State Visit to Germany next month and to our State Visit to Malta in November, alongside the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. We also look forward to welcoming His Excellency the President of The People's Republic of China and Madame Peng on a State Visit in October.

My Government will seek effective global collaboration to sustain economic recovery and to combat climate change, including at the climate change conference in Paris later this year.

My Government will undertake a full strategic defence and security review, and do whatever is necessary to ensure that our courageous Armed Forces can keep Britain safe.

My Government will work to reduce the threat from nuclear weapons, cyber attacks and terrorism.

Other measures will be laid before you.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons, I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels".

11.42 am

The House adjourned during pleasure.

3.30 pm

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Southwark.

Several noble Lords took the oath or made the solemn affirmation, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Retirements of Members

Announcement

3.51 pm

The Lord Speaker (Baroness D'Souza): My Lords, I should like to notify the House of the retirements, with effect from 23 May, of the noble Lords, Lord Prys-Davies and Lord Roper, pursuant to Section 1 of the House of Lords Reform Act 2014. On behalf of the House, I should like to thank the noble Lords for their much-valued service to the House.

Select Vestries Bill

First Reading

3.52 pm

The Bill was read a first time pro forma.

Queen's Speech

Debate (1st Day)

3.53 pm

The Lord Speaker (Baroness D'Souza): My Lords, I have to acquaint the House that Her Majesty was pleased this morning to make a most gracious Speech from the Throne to both Houses of Parliament assembled in the House of Lords. Copies of the gracious Speech are available in the Printed Paper Office. I have, for the convenience of the House, arranged for the terms of the gracious Speech to be published in the *Official Report*.

Motion for an Humble Address

Moved by Baroness Bottomley of Nettlestone

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

"Most Gracious Sovereign—We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament assembled, beg leave to thank Your Majesty for the most gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament".

3.54 pm

Baroness Bottomley of Nettlestone (Con): My Lords, it is a special privilege to be invited to move this Motion for the Humble Address. Her Majesty's presence today again demonstrates her exemplary dedication to duty. The Queen represents the unity of our nation. Like her predecessors and her successors, she is the person to whom Ministers owe their allegiance. We so much also appreciate the presence of the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall.

This is a momentous year for the monarchy. We rejoice that, in September, the Queen becomes the longest-serving sovereign in our history. There will be widespread celebrations in recognition of her extraordinary contribution throughout this country, the Commonwealth and many other lands. Admiration and affection for the Queen extend far beyond our shores. In November, in her 90th year, she will attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Malta, maintaining her lifelong commitment to the Commonwealth—a central part of her life, of our national history, and of our future.

We also celebrate the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta. We now recognise it as a pivot in our history. Magna Carta established that the Crown is not unfettered and that government must work within rules. Barons and the church stood up to executive authority in establishing the rule of law. The charter was not initially a great success. It was revoked and subsequently replaced. On occasion, the power of the Crown has had to be constrained or confronted by force, a situation foreseen in the Great Charter. During the English Civil War, the gates of the city of Hull were shut against the King.

At the heart of our society and at the heart of this House is a belief in justice. We believe in being fair and in the rule of law to protect and bind all citizens. Parliament has evolved as an institution and this

House still evolves. We face and accept criticism, some of which is justified, but much is not. Parliament is fundamental to our healthy democracy and we should speak up for this institution and strive to make it stronger.

Other anniversaries concern armed conflict, including the continuing struggle of the 1914-18 war. In particular this year, and this month, sees the 70th anniversary of VE Day. We and others fought against tyranny, against those who did not believe in justice, and against those who rejected the rule of law. With millions in other countries, many of our countrymen gave their lives for what we hold dear. As one born after that war, perhaps I may say how great our debt is to them. Dunkirk, El Alamein and the Normandy landings will live on in our history for ever. We must continue the struggle to help others around the world achieve what we take for granted, and sometimes a little too much for granted. Our task in Parliament is to be vigilant. We are here not for our own good, but for the public good. We must never lose sight of our fundamental values. There will be times when we disagree about how to achieve our goal, but I trust that we will never disagree about the goal itself.

We have the freedom to resolve our disputes by debate and general elections. Returning from the exertions of recent weeks, we each have our memories. My highlight involved supporting the excellent candidate for West Worthing, now joyfully returned for his 40th year in the other place. I used my best powers of persuasion on the doorstep and one resident replied, "I didn't know who to vote for till I met you, love, but now I know I'm voting for the other side". There have been many victors and losers in the recent election, but perhaps we can all agree that the greatest losers were the pollsters.

Let me pay tribute to the Liberal Democrats, who, after a gap of 31 years, participated in government in a principled and courageous manner. We appreciate the devastating effect of losing so many prominent and valued parliamentarians. Let me also recognise the noble Baroness, Lady Royall of Blaisdon, for her outstanding service as Leader both in government and in opposition.

With their retirement, we have said farewell to many eminent and long-standing colleagues. I particularly identify my noble and learned friend Lord Howe of Aberavon, a man I served as PPS to in the Foreign Office. He occupied two of the major offices of state with the greatest distinction. There are others, and we send them our best wishes.

Moving to this Parliament, we are delighted that the Leader of the House is now in her rightful place as a full member of the Cabinet. In a short space of time, my noble friend has established her quality: calm, tenacious and collegiate. We are in safe hands. Indeed, this election was certainly a victory for women. When I became a Member of the other place more than 30 years ago, when the first female Leader of this House, the late Lady Young, was in office, I was one of 24 female MPs—fewer than 4%. We now welcome 191 female Members in the other place, almost 30% better than the figures in this House, along with the much-improved participation by people of black and

ethnic- minority backgrounds. This is a far cry from the 19th century, when the Earl of Chesterfield—statesman, man of letters and wit—remarked that:

"Women, then, are only children of a larger growth; they have an entertaining tattle, and sometimes wit; but for solid reasoning, good sense, I never knew ... one that had ... acted consequentially for four-and-twenty hours together".

Only a century ago, Margot Asquith, the outspoken wife of the Liberal Prime Minister, said:

"No amount of education will make women first-rate politicians. Can you see a woman becoming Prime Minister? I cannot imagine a greater calamity for these islands than to be put under the guidance of a woman in Downing Street".

Margaret Thatcher was chosen by her colleagues as the best person in 1975. The country chose her as Prime Minister in 1979. She transformed this country and our position in the world.

The *Economist*—that bastion of enlightened liberal values—has finally appointed a woman as its 17th, and first female, editor. Nearly 200 years ago, responding to calls for women's suffrage, it asked:

"Would they give up their noble calling as wives and mothers ... to become incompetent surgeons, third-rate physicians, shallow lawyers, wordy, inconsiderate and excitable senators, or hasty, impulsive and discredited Ministers of State?".

Closer to the point, perhaps, 100 years ago, the editor of the *Economist* quipped:

"You can get a first-class woman for the price of a second-class man".

Nothing changes.

I turn to the gracious Speech. Having served as a Minister and Secretary of State for Health, I welcome the Government's unequivocal commitment to the NHS, reinforced by the Prime Minister's first public speech on returning to Downing Street. Implementing the NHS five-year plan, integrating health and social care, ensuring the NHS works on a seven-day basis and improving access to GPs are all important goals. The focus on mental health is particularly welcome to many in this House who, like me, have long championed this critical cause. With such an array of esteemed experts in this House the workload of the Lords Minister is especially onerous. How much we admire the courageous, courteous and knowledgeable approach of our noble friend Lord Howe. He has magnificently handled this brief for the past 18 years. We congratulate him on his appointment as Deputy Leader. We look forward to David Prior's contributions. Like father, like son. Is this a modification of the hereditary principle?

We welcome other newly appointed talented Peers, including the noble Baroness, Lady Altmann, of Tottenham, an acclaimed pensions expert and campaigner—especially valuable in this House, perhaps.

The stewardship of the NHS is a demanding but rewarding activity. The Secretary of State's reappointment gives us confidence, with his formidable effectiveness and commitment. He was head boy of the local school when I was first elected and, delightfully, my constituency successor. The House will be aware that the politics of health are hard fought, although my noble friend Lord Fowler, who so memorably proposed the Loyal Address last year, managed to undertake the herculean tasks of being Secretary of State for both health and social security at the same time.

[BARONESS BOTTOMLEY OF NETTLESTONE]

During a particularly difficult debate, I told the chief whip, "I understand what being a Minister involves. It is like my three great-uncles who were killed in the First World War. When the whistle blows, you get out of the trenches and walk towards the guns". "If your ministerial colleagues understood that better, Virginia, life would be much easier", was the response of my now noble friend Lord Ryder. Having been vigorously challenged on the "Today" programme by the then president of the BMA, he left the studio in excellent spirits, amiably saying, "Well done, Virginia, I hope that helps with the Chancellor".

Another time, when emotions ran high, our doctor daughter, wearing the mandatory name badge, was asked by an agitated patient, "Are you a relation of that Virginia Bottomley?". "My mother assures me there is the closest possible connection", was her careful response and the subject dropped.

I greatly valued the assistance of the brightest and best young member of the research department, David Cameron, now happily re-elected Prime Minister. Another adviser was a much-loved late Member of this House, Lord Hussey. He argued that being chairman of the BBC and chairman of the Marsden had great similarities. Each involved the management of passion in an institution virtually regarded as a national religion, where sentiment all too easily obstructed innovation and obscured the need for courageous decisions and for change.

The central theme underpinning the gracious Speech is the Government's commitment to work in the interests of everyone in our country to adopt a one-nation approach, supporting aspiration and giving new opportunities to the most disadvantaged. Bringing different parts of our country and our nation together is at the heart of the programme. As the first female to become a member of the one nation group, I especially welcome this—one nation, north, south, east and west, including our great cities, our towns, villages and countryside.

I mentioned Hull earlier. I have the honour of being the chancellor of the University of Hull, succeeding the noble Lord, Lord Armstrong of Ilminster. Could there be another politics department with two Members of this House—my noble friend Lord Norton and the noble Lord, Lord Parekh? Many others have an association with it. I am also sheriff of the city. The city exemplifies civic pride. It was the home of William Wilberforce. The founder of the university, Thomas Ferens, served as its MP, notably giving away his fortune for the betterment of others. There is a sense of fair play and of pulling together at times of stress, such as during the floods and where the sports teams are concerned—Hull City will be back in the Premier League.

The city, like the nation, has faced great upheaval. It was heavily bombed in both world wars. It has endured economic adversity. Building the northern powerhouse will benefit Hull, along with many other major industrial cities. Hull now faces the future with greater confidence. It has attracted industry, including the Siemens offshore wind turbine plant, and your Lordships will know that it is to be the 2017 UK City of Culture, when the eyes of the nation will be on Hull.

Over the past 50 years we have seen astonishing change—the disappearance of empire, profound social movement, enormous economic and political changes—of which our monarch has been at the heart. This House is another part of bringing people together in a way that no other country or Chamber does. People from all races and religions, a variety of ages and varied backgrounds, politicians and civil servants, the military, academics, scientists, judges and clerics: it is an extraordinary gathering. We are proud of our history. It is pride not for its own sake, but for what that history represents. We fight for precious values. We have a magnificent Head of State. We are fortunate in enjoying freedoms often denied to others. In this House, we are the successors of the barons and bishops who pressed King John to affix his seal to the Great Charter. We have great responsibilities. We must fulfil them. I beg to move the Motion for an humble Address to Her Majesty.

4.08 pm

Lord Finkelstein (Con): My Lords, I beg to second my noble friend's Motion for an humble Address. It is a great privilege to be asked to deliver this speech and to have the opportunity to address a full House of noble Lords. I was once invited to give a speech in Norwich, which involved travelling more than four hours to get there. When I arrived, I found that there were only two people in the audience. One of them was the person who had invited me. The other waited until I had finished speaking and I invited him to join the cause that I was there to support. He said that he would like to, but it would interfere with the terms of his parole. I am pleased that I have here a more conveniently located, larger audience, and that those present have completed their probation—mostly.

Speaking to a full House also fulfils the useful function of allowing fellow Peers finally to overcome the embarrassment of not being 100% certain of one's name. One noble Peer is aware that I am a newspaper columnist and is kind enough to ask me about it often. However, he appears to think that I work for the *Daily Telegraph* rather than the *Times*, and it has never been quite the right moment to correct him. On the day the last Session opened, he slapped me on the back and said, "Good morning, Danny. I hope that your columns are continuing to boost the circulation of the *Telegraph*". I replied that I was quite certain that they were.

As the son of refugees, it is also a great honour to be given the chance to celebrate the role played by the monarchy in ensuring the stability and continuity of British democracy. As I said in my maiden speech, no one is more appreciative of the security afforded by the British constitution than the freed prisoners of totalitarian jails and concentration camps. As my grandmother put it, "While the Queen is safe in Buckingham Palace, we are safe in Hendon Central".

I was not merely gratified to be asked to give this speech but also surprised. However, the noble Baroness, Lady Stowell, assured me that I was the overwhelming popular choice, and then she spoilt it by saying, "According to YouGov".

We are meeting here to review the Government's legislative programme in political circumstances which only some people anticipated. As I was leaving a

government department in March, following a meeting with a ministerial friend, I was taken down in the lift by Kevin, the messenger who had accompanied me to the ground floor many times over the previous five years. As we reached the bottom I said, "Well Kevin, this could be the last time we do this". He looked at me, shook his head slowly and said, "Naaah". This turned out to be more perceptive political analysis than most of what was written in the media over the following two months.

Everyone in this House will have their own theory of what happened, but I would just like to say this: there are in this country many people who just want quiet, moderate, sensible, pragmatic government. They do not have great theories about austerity or redistribution or varieties of capitalism. They value security and liberty and the rule of law. They want to go to work, raise families, take home as much as possible of what they earn and get decent public services at a reasonable cost. Some of these people have been called shy Tories, but in truth they mostly are not shy and they do not even really think of themselves as Tories. Some of them may vote Conservative but that is their business and no one else's. I believe this legislative programme is for them—for the quiet, practical, moderate working people of this country: a long-term economic plan that understands, as most people do, that it is our duty in this generation to restrain our spending in order to avoid passing on ever-greater debts to our children and grandchildren; the security of a job, the chance to own a home, better schools, securing the real value of a pension, protecting the NHS, lower taxes for the lowest paid, building the northern powerhouse. This programme is set firmly in the centre ground of British politics, where the people are. I look forward to debating these measures with noble Lords in the coming Session.

Those programming business are looking to see if they are up to the tricky task of finding a day of the week on which all the parties in this House are in favour of a European referendum at the same time, and to finding plenty of time for the reports and other debates that make our House special. Legislation moved by individual noble Lords often provides the highlight of a Session. I always remember when the Bill of the noble Lord, Lord Archer, on the succession to the Throne reached its Second Reading stage as it was the first time anything written by him had been read twice.

Some have suggested that this next period will be a difficult one in this House, that because the governing party is in a minority we will struggle to pass laws. Can I say that I hope and believe these critics have misunderstood this House? They have misunderstood the dedication of noble Lords and our understanding of our duty and the limits of our powers. The body of Liberal Peers, who I note are puzzlingly still in their seats notwithstanding my column in this morning's newspaper, for so long our valued colleagues, and among them many good friends, come from the great movement of Asquith and Lloyd George that invented those limits and would not frivolously abuse them. Opposite us, too, sits the great party of Morrison, Bevin, Gaitskell and Blair that has spent decades in power and knows that its time will come again. It will treat this Government as Labour has in the past been

treated and will in future wish to be treated. In any case, I know that it is rethinking many of the ideas on which it fought the last election. After all, it is not as if its manifesto was carved in stone.

Noble Lords: Oh!

Lord Finkelstein: I could not resist it, sorry. Politics excites great expectations that it cannot always meet. No matter what is done, it is never enough. There is an old Jewish joke about a woman who takes her son to the beach. It is a windy day so she wraps him up tightly in a coat, scarf and hat. No sooner have they gone out than a huge wave sweeps the boy out to sea. He is quite gone and his mother is distraught. She begins to pray, "Lord, my boy is just an innocent lad. Send him back to me". There is a rushing sound and a massive wave crashes at her feet, depositing her boy. He is alive, he is safe—it is a miracle. She looks up, she looks down. She looks up again and says, "He had a hat!"

This legislative programme will not do everything. It will not make every problem right. It will not be perfect. It will just take us a few steps forward and I hope that these are steps we can all take together in the spirit of one nation. In this spirit, I second the Motion.

Motion to Adjourn

Moved by **Baroness Royall of Blaisdon**

That this debate be adjourned until tomorrow.

4.15 pm

Baroness Royall of Blaisdon (Lab): My Lords, I warmly congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Bottomley of Nettlestone, and the noble Lord, Lord Finkelstein, on their speeches. They have continued the tradition of excellence by those moving and seconding the humble Address.

The noble Baroness, Lady Bottomley, has come a long way since her days studying sociology in the 1960s at the then revolutionary hotbed, the University of Essex, where she was described as,

"a very strong-willed student with left-wing sentiments"—

to which I have to say, what went wrong? However, the noble Baroness remains related to, among others, my noble friend Lord Hunt of Chesterton, and of course his son, the honourable Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central. We have party membership forms in our office should she wish to arrange a family reunion at some point.

While it is often said that gentlemen prefer blondes, I note that one of the noble Baroness's many middle names is Brunette. I have to say that I am very grateful that my parents did not name me Ginger. I must, however, congratulate the noble Baroness on her stellar career, both in government and in the world beyond. Notwithstanding her known commitment to the Church of England, she is a great example of the fact that in politics, too, there is an afterlife. So I may well be beating a path to her door in due course.

[BARONESS ROYALL OF BLAISDON]

The Chancellor, George Osborne, has been reported as saying that he talks to the noble Lord, Lord Finkelstein, more than he does to his own wife—for which I am sure his wife is very grateful.

Noble Lords: Oh!

Baroness Royall of Blaisdon: On his ennoblement, the *Guardian* suggested that the noble Lord was a dead ringer for one Ron Weasley, the famous friend and close confidant of Harry Potter. I hope for reassurance from the Leader that the forthcoming schools Bill will not include any measures to force Hogwarts to take academy status. I know that as a Chelsea FC supporter, the noble Lord will have been celebrating two blue wins this month. Those who follow football tell me that there is no comparison between the two victories—one was headed by a hard-nosed, highly paid campaigner from overseas who will do anything to get a result; the other by Chelsea's winning manager.

I am addressing your Lordships as Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition when I fervently hoped for the people of this country that we would be on the opposite side of the Chamber. I believe in the power of politics to change lives. So did the hundreds of candidates up and down the country who put their lives on hold, as well as their party organisers and the thousands of supporters who knocked on doors, delivered leaflets, ran phone banks, organised staker bases and provided much-needed sustenance. I had the pleasure and privilege of working with many, including three special young people in Gloucester: Chris, Emma and Tom.

The gracious Speech makes much of a one-nation approach but I fear that the state of the union, as the President of the United States might say, is sadly not strong, with tension between England and Scotland stirred up and all too successfully exploited by strategists on both sides, and the unionist centre ground squeezed. But despite this, I know that noble Lords on all sides agree that our union must be rebuilt. I hope that the many Scots among us will support the three remaining defenders of the union in the other place. Britain is a great country and we are better together. That said, such was the result north of the border that my noble and learned friend Lady Scotland has been considering changing her name. Perhaps the noble Lord, Lord Strathclyde, has been thinking the same—and I must say that he has enough names to lose.

With respect to the Speech before us, if the proposals for a British Bill of rights mean the scrapping of the Human Rights Act this will also increase pressures on the union. The commission on a bill of rights set up in 2011 found that the people in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland did not display the same hostility to the Act as those driving the debate. Mr Cameron should understand both the limitations of support for the scrapping of the HRA and the dangers to the bonds of the union. In doing so, he might recall the words of Edmund Burke, who wrote that, "whenever a separation is made between liberty and justice, neither is, in my opinion, safe".

This is clearly not the Queen's Speech that I had hoped for, with much-needed measures to attack the widening inequalities in our society, enabling all to grow their talents to the benefit of our country, and of

course the abolition of the dreadful and pernicious bedroom tax. I would be grateful if the Leader could say which of the Bills announced in the Speech will begin in this House and how long the first parliamentary Session is likely to be. Noble Lords will have noticed the plethora of spending commitments, so I also have to ask: how will these be paid for?

It is welcome that more people are now employed in our country but I am concerned about the quality of many of the jobs created. Work brings dignity when someone earns enough to keep themselves and their family but too many working people continue to rely on in-work benefits and when a utility bill, or the need to replace a household appliance, tips them over the edge some have to turn to that hard-hearted symbol of the Cameron era: the food bank. As the Prime Minister's former guru Steve Hilton remarked last week, it is,

"outrageous that people should work all hours of the week and still have to live on benefits because they don't get paid enough", as well as being,

"a really big problem, both economically, socially and morally".

It is one thing encouraging people to pull themselves up by their bootstraps but quite another to go around kicking down the pillars of support that have long helped those struggling to get by.

As with decent jobs and fair pay, good housing is a cornerstone of family life and society. Get it right and much else follows, including improved health and a much more positive approach to school, college and work. The commitment to build 275,000 affordable homes by 2020 fails to understand the scale of the problem and falls way short of the 1 million that Labour proposed. Ministers must do better to ensure a balance between houses for sale, homes for rent and affordable public housing. Instead, we have before us a half-baked plan to sell off housing association homes, which presents huge practical difficulties and sums that simply do not add up. It has also been met with much derision from across the housing sector.

Decentralisation was at the heart of Labour's plans for growth and a more balanced country. New powers are being offered to some of our great city regions but rural areas should also play a similarly important role in driving our economy. Such devolution is a good thing but I have concerns about the Government's rationale and fear that behind the apparent good intention sits a more hard-nosed agenda. Over the past five years, major funding reductions for local government, education, social security and policing, combined with the transfer of key NHS responsibilities on to councils, have left parts of our country feeling cast adrift and bereft of previous support. Imagine the consequences if the principles of the small state and an unfettered free market were injected into the bloodstream of our public services, with co-operation and collaboration falling by the wayside while competition runs rife, and public bodies meeting merely to sign off contracts while community and social ties unbind. No wonder local authority leaders from the now Conservative-led Local Government Association are warning that another round of cuts will devastate services and harm the most vulnerable. With the devolution of responsibility, government must will the means as well as the end.

The proposals announced on decentralisation, English votes for English laws and devolution to Wales and Scotland, the continuing demands to go beyond the measures agreed by the Smith commission and hints about boundary changes lead me to renew our calls on the Government to establish a constitutional convention. Such a convention could consider the future of this very Chamber and look at change in the round rather than in the piecemeal way that we are experiencing, with its profound implications for our country.

From concerns with the national and local, I turn to the global. We live in a great country, but our full potential cannot be realised in isolation. Such a position sadly looks set to continue apace as we seriously consider a possible exit from the European Union. The need to protect ourselves and our allies from terrorism is ever present, but we must also ensure that we safeguard our interests in business and in trade, play an influential role in matters concerning climate change and technological innovation, and help tackle the root causes of global poverty by taking a lead in international development. During the last Parliament, Mr Cameron's failure to control the Eurosceptic wing of his party and the rise of UKIP began to dominate our country's world view. But getting to this point has not just been a narrow political failure on the part of the Conservatives; those of us who believe that our future lies in the European Union must talk with, and not at, people and clearly demonstrate the wider benefits of membership.

I have two final points on the EU referendum—for today at least. We will vote for the Bill but we believe that younger people need a stronger voice in society and that the referendum would provide one opportunity, perhaps helping to deal with the sort of alienation that Georgia Gould, the daughter of my noble friend Lady Rebuck and our sadly departed colleague Philip, the Lord Gould of Brookwood, has identified in her excellent book, *Wasted*. We saw last year how young people in Scotland engaged in the run-up to the independence referendum. I hope that Mr Cameron will learn from that experience and offer 16 and 17 year-olds a say over whether their country should remain within the EU. Meanwhile, I am sure that all noble Lords would be grateful for confirmation from the noble Baroness that we in this House will be able to vote on what will be a critical decision about our future.

Notwithstanding the fact that I will no longer lead for my party on these Benches, I thought it worth recalling a few observations from more recent humble Address debates, when Labour was the majority party in the other place but in a political minority here. I hope your Lordships will indulge me a moment, as these observations might in fact jog a few memories, fond and otherwise. For example,

"we shall endeavour to act as a constructive but vigorous Opposition. We shall play our part in helping this House to fulfil its obligations as a second Chamber, to scrutinise and improve legislation and, when—and only when—judgment dictates, to ask another place to think again".—[*Official Report*, 14/5/97; col. 17.]

That was Viscount Cranborne in 1997, leading the Conservative response in the humble Address that followed Tony Blair's first landslide victory.

"Good constructive opposition has a vital democratic role, and I do not wish to see this House cowed and controlled".—[*Official Report*, 20/6/01; col. 17.]

That of course was the noble Lord, Lord Strathclyde, four years later, following Labour's second landslide victory.

"The Government have won a clear election victory ... They are entitled to the fruits of that victory and I congratulate them on it. But they cannot ignore the warning signs and they should not evade or curtail the scrutiny of Parliament".—[*Official Report*, 17/5/05; col. 16.]

Your Lordships will have already guessed—that is the noble Lord, Lord Strathclyde, once again, in 2005, following our third election victory. Those were the days.

During those three Parliaments, politics in this House was a numbers game. In theory, no overall control; in practice, and with Labour not even the largest group until 2006, opposition parties could come together readily to defeat us. They did that more than 500 times, on more than 30% of Divisions. During the past five years, coalition government meant a majority here, with my party the lone political opposition. Given our numerical weakness we did amazingly well, thanks to the very strong team which contributed heavily towards a century-plus of formal defeats and secured many more concessions.

However, the situation now, thanks in part to the 1999 hereditary Peers Act, is historic for Labour. In some respects, there will be similarities with our period of government, although the Conservative group is already the largest and expected to increase. Could the Leader say what plans she has to deal with the size of this House beyond encouraging more retirements? Either way, it is most definitely the first time in opposition when it will not be difficult for us to join forces with other noble Lords to defeat the Government. That is a great power to have, and in this unelected place, a great responsibility too.

As a responsible Opposition, we will continue to stand by the broad principles of the Salisbury convention, as set out in the report of the Joint Committee agreed by this House in 2007. However, we will seek to challenge legislation in the usual ways, engaging constructively and making improvements where possible. Following amendments made to Bills in the last Parliament, we will also be on the lookout—Blue Watch, if you will—for attempts to introduce the substance or intent of those concessions via secondary legislation. Given that some of those concessions were made in response to internal tensions within the coalition, on the Labour Benches we look forward to those noble Lords recently freed from their five-year experience of Stockholm syndrome joining us more regularly in holding Ministers to account.

I acknowledge that Labour not only lost the election but lost it badly, in part because of the nationalist surge in Scotland but also because many people in England and Wales believed that we could not yet be trusted to run the economy. As the noble Lord, Lord Finkelstein, suggested in his reflections on the result, the non-shy, non-Tory supposedly shy Tories allowed Mr Cameron to achieve what for most commentators, pollsters and indeed bookmakers seemed an unlikely majority. However, if we consider how people voted in different places, including for second-place parties, we look, feel and indeed are a more divided country than ever before and in a way that is far more complex than the north/south binaries of the 1980s and 1990s.

[BARONESS ROYALL OF BLAISDON]

As Labour did then, our party will, during this Parliament, continue to fight to protect those institutions and ideals that we believe bring our country together and make it great: the NHS, the BBC, human rights, rights at work, legal aid, dignity for the disabled, the future of the union and our future inside the European Union. This is what I have sought to do during my time as Leader and then shadow Leader of this House. I know that whoever succeeds me will do the same.

On a personal note, if noble Lords will allow me, it has been a huge privilege to serve for nearly seven years. I am proud of my group. This House, albeit in need of reform, is an integral and important part of our nation's constitutional make-up. I like the way in which we do politics in this place. I hear all too often from people up and down the country that they have lost faith in politics and politicians. One reason cited is that we are too shrill, too aggressive, too partisan and too ready to question not just the policies of our opponents—that is right and proper—but their very morality, as if our own tribe is somehow superior. I am pleased that political abuse is not our style. It would be ironic, would it not, if this House, so often derided as elderly, elitist and out of touch, were to show the British people that there is a better way for us to do politics—to disagree but not to be disagreeable, as my right honourable friend Ed Miliband put it just a couple of weeks ago. That is my firm wish for the future of our political system as a whole and I will continue to play my part from the Back Benches. I beg to move that this debate be adjourned until tomorrow.

4.32 pm

Lord Wallace of Tankerness (LD): My Lords, it is indeed a pleasure to echo the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, in her praise for the very able proposer of the humble Address: the noble Baroness, Lady Bottomley of Nettlestone. I start by thanking the noble Baroness for her gracious acknowledgement of the contribution that my party and colleagues made in government over the past five years: that in 2010 we stepped up to the plate and took responsibility. What she said was very much appreciated.

As the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, said, the noble Baroness, Lady Bottomley, has had an interesting, varied and distinguished career. I note in particular that she is still a trustee of the *Economist* newspaper. She quoted some historic editions of that esteemed publication but it would be remiss of me today not to mention a more recent verdict that it made ahead of the general election. It said that the risk of a Tory Government was an EU exit, and concluded that,

“the best hope for Britain is with a continuation of a Conservative-led coalition”,

with the Liberal Democrats. While coalition government is certainly not in the immediate thinking of my colleagues in the other place, I assure the noble Baroness that she is always welcome to join us in the voting Lobbies on issues such as Europe and voting reform, which the *Economist* praises so highly.

The Motion on the humble Address was seconded most ably by the noble Lord, Lord Finkelstein. He is of course a remarkable and compelling writer, which was clearly evident in his response to the gracious

Speech today. But I cannot help but note the noble Lord's article in today's *Times* on the death of the Liberal Democrats, to which he referred. I would simply say to the noble Lord, to misquote the great Mark Twain, that, “reports of our death have been greatly exaggerated”. Of course, Mark Twain also said that to,

“succeed in life you need two things: ignorance and confidence”.

I say with great fondness to the noble Lord, whose Twitter account I started to follow only last week, that he made a very confident speech today.

It is also a pleasure to follow the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, this afternoon, and I hope there will be further opportunities in your Lordships' House at a later stage to pay a more fulsome tribute to her. On behalf of my colleagues, I should say that we believe that she has been of great service to this House, both as Leader of the House and Leader of the Opposition. We wish her well, and we know that she will continue to campaign for and champion the causes that mean so much to her.

I express my personal congratulations to the Leader of the House, the noble Baroness, Lady Stowell of Beeston, on her continuation in office, and quite properly at Cabinet rank. She has proven herself to be a well-liked and capable Leader of this House, meticulous in her attention to detail and scrupulous in her desire to represent the interests and views of the whole House. I wish her every success in this role in what I suspect will be a very different Parliament from the last one.

I counted it a real privilege to be Deputy Leader of your Lordships' House and to work closely with the noble Baroness and her predecessor, the noble Lord, Lord Hill of Oareford. I particularly want to congratulate the noble Earl, Lord Howe, on becoming Deputy Leader of this House; he is a paragon of calm in what I am sure will sometimes be stormy waters. Before working with the noble Baroness, Lady Stowell, as Deputy Leader, we worked closely together as we steered the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill through your Lordships' House. I am sure she agrees that it is one of our proudest achievements in ministerial office in the coalition Government.

It is an honour and a privilege to be in government, and I remain proud of the progressive liberal changes that my party helped to bring about in the last five years, which I believe made this country fairer. But there can be no doubt from the election campaign and the results that followed that this is a very difficult time for the Liberal Democrats. It is also a dangerous time for liberal democracy. Liberal British values of tolerance, generosity and moderation are under threat as never before, just when they are most needed. The rise of nationalism that we are seeing both in England and in Scotland, with the divisions that it provokes and the fear that it promotes, is the antithesis of freedom, liberty and equality—everything that I believe in and everything that my party stands for. If I can believe it, I am pleased that the gracious Speech made clear that the Government's intention is to be a one-nation Government. However, given the way in which they sometimes stoked fear of the SNP to win their majority, one sometimes wonders which nation. I echo what the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, said: we will work with the Government to ensure that we secure the integrity of the United Kingdom, because I fundamentally believe that we are better together.

Therefore, I welcome the announcement of a Scotland Bill in the gracious Speech, based on the Smith commission proposals. Honouring commitments made to Wales and Northern Ireland is equally important. So, too, is the welcome but still insufficient commitment to devolution in the north. But, as many noble Lords mentioned in debates in the last Parliament, and as the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, said today, there needs to be coherence to our constitutional developments. The time has surely come for a major, cross-party constitutional convention, to find a new resting point for British politics and a new settlement for our nations, our regions, our cities and our people. This Parliament has the opportunity to be the one that creates a new, lasting settlement for our country.

It should come as no surprise that we are disappointed by much of the content of the gracious Speech. The Government's agenda set out in the gracious Speech smacks of a party set to fight the battles of the past, and possibly to repeat some of its mistakes. We have heard much in recent days about this being the first gracious Speech of a majority Conservative Government in almost 20 years. The pity of it is that they seem intent on taking up just where they left off. The European Referendum Bill is the latest manifestation of efforts to paper over cracks in the Conservative Party. There is almost no greater example of our nation's commitment to being an open, internationalist country than our membership of the European Union. We can and should be at the forefront of shaping the EU. To put that in jeopardy, particularly at a time when our economy is still fragile, is not the forward-looking agenda that we on these Benches wish to see. Instead, it would be better to look at how we can work with our European allies, within the European Union, to tackle the challenges of the next generation, particularly climate change. Instead of an EU referendum, a forward-looking gracious Speech would have seen Bills to create a zero-carbon Britain, where green energy and green industry can thrive. When the EU referendum Bill comes to your Lordships' House, I can assure your Lordships that we shall give it the thorough scrutiny that is this House's hallmark.

The gracious Speech is also notable for the omission of firm legislative proposals for the repeal and replacement of the Human Rights Act. It sometimes makes me wonder whether it was a Conservative manifesto commitment made as a chip to be bargained away in a potential coalition negotiation. The former Attorney-General described last autumn's Conservative proposals as "unworkable" and as containing "a number of howlers", so no wonder they have now hit the pause button. Colleagues on these Benches will certainly scrutinise robustly whatever consultative proposals emerge in the weeks ahead. In addition, we will be advocating a new Bill of Rights—a digital Bill of Rights—which will help safeguard and protect our citizens online and ensure that the rights enshrined in British law in 1998 hold true as we enter a world full of new technology that does not respect national boundaries.

Obviously, there are some Bills that are to be welcomed in the gracious Speech. Measures to expand childcare, increase the personal allowance, increase apprenticeships and address issues of mental health are all welcome, not least because they are measures whose genesis lies

on these Benches rather than with the Prime Minister's policy team. However, all will be undermined if the ideological drive for spending cuts undermines many of these proposals. Measures to tackle coasting schools are all well and good, but not when the Government plan to cut billions from the schools budget, which we on these Benches wish to see protected. Too often we see a backward-looking agenda from a party that seems to want to fight the grievances of the past rather than to look forward to innovation and new ideas.

I conclude by talking briefly about the conventions of your Lordships' House. Much has been written in the days since the election—indeed, this was referred to by the noble Lord, Lord Finkelstein—about the predicament in which the Government now find themselves here and the importance of the Salisbury convention. It is of course right and proper that we uphold the measures that allow our revising Chamber to remain a self-regulating House. I do not question the right of the House of Commons and a Government who command its confidence to have their legislation dealt with in a constructive manner by this House. However, we may wish to reflect on the strength of the mandate of a Government who secured less than 37% of the popular vote on a turnout of 66% should they seek to drive through ill-thought-through and reactionary legislation without the robust scrutiny and proper checks and balances provided by your Lordships' House. The House and the Government would do well to remember that the report produced under the chairmanship of the noble Lord, Lord Cunningham, *Conventions of the UK Parliament*, recognised the right of this House, in extreme and exceptional circumstances, to say no. The importance of the House of Lords retaining the right to say no is that that is the power which brings the Government to the table in a constructive frame of mind. Indeed, Ministers would be wise to heed the words of the noble Lord, Lord Strathclyde, in his evidence to the Cunningham committee, when he said that,

"where a government is trying to push through some very unpopular measure with a very, very small majority, with a substantial government rebellion, I think it is a clear signal for the House of Lords to take extra special care in examining that measure".

This House has demonstrated time and again that we can be the last bastion of defence of civil liberties and human rights. On these issues in particular, this House has a legitimate right to question the excesses of any Government. It has the right vigorously to scrutinise and revise legislation.

On 15 May, the *Guardian* said of the Liberal Democrats: "Missing them Already". I can assure your Lordships that, in the key debates and legislative scrutiny which take place in your Lordships' House in this Parliament, we have no intention of being missing in action.

4.43 pm

Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Con): My Lords, it is such an honour to stand here again as Leader of your Lordships' House. I really could not be more proud to have been given the task of leading this House into a new Parliament, or more conscious of the weight of responsibility now sitting on my shoulders. Although we return to the familiar world of single-party government,

[BARONESS STOWELL OF BEESTON]

I assure all noble Lords that I will always remain conscious of my duty to represent the whole House. With that in mind, I thank Black Rod and the staff of the House on behalf of us all for their hard work in making today such a success.

It is especially welcome that my role today allows me to pay tribute to those who we have just heard from—first to the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, for moving the Motion to Adjourn. As the House has heard today, it might be her last contribution as Leader of the Opposition, and certainly her last contribution on the day of State Opening. It was typical of the passion and eloquence that have marked her time on the Front Bench, not only in her current role but also as government Chief Whip and Leader of the House. Many noble Lords will recall her achievements in that latter role, particularly the strength of her leadership. For my part, I best remember, when I was a new Whip on the Front Bench, my first encounter with the noble Baroness at the Dispatch Box on the then Protection of Freedoms Bill, when, despite my noble friend Lord Henley's assurances to the contrary, the government amendment that I was moving was not as anodyne as he had told me it would be. I found myself on that occasion under polite but persistent fire from the noble Baroness. However, while I remember her determination on that occasion in seeking to protect the most vulnerable in our society and giving me a hard time, I also well recall the kindness and good grace that she has shown to me, throughout that time and since. For her leadership and dedication on both the government and opposition Benches, and for her part in ensuring that ultimately we have been able to uphold the customs and conventions that set our work apart, I know that the noble Baroness's service to this House will not be forgotten.

I pay tribute also to the noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace of Tankerness. I am privileged to have had the chance to work alongside him, whether as fellow business managers or when I was a junior member of his team taking the Justice and Security Bill through this House, or indeed when we worked on the equal marriage Bill—as he says, one of the great pieces of legislation that we passed in the previous Parliament, which I am very proud to have played a part in. The noble and learned Lord and I have frequently been a double act in recent years. We should not forget that the House as a whole has benefited from having him as an outstanding Advocate-General for Scotland among our ranks, especially during the past year or so when Scotland has been such a big issue for us all. He can be justly proud of the part that he played in the previous Government, as indeed can all noble Lords from the Liberal Democrats who served on the Front Bench during the last Parliament. That we were able to achieve so much as a partnership, and that it lasted the distance, is down in no small part to the noble and learned Lord and his colleagues, and for that I thank him and them sincerely.

It is a real pleasure for me to congratulate my noble friend Lady Bottomley on her speech. I am pleased that on this occasion she allowed me to headhunt her. As we all know, my noble friend is a fabulous blonde who, as we have heard from my noble friend herself, has a middle name of Brunette. She is an intriguing,

stylish woman of substance who has blazed a trail but has also gone out of her way to support other women, myself very much included. Indeed, she talked quite a bit about the role of women in public life and was kind enough to mention my own appointment to Cabinet. I recall clearly her own appointment, alongside that of my noble friend Lady Shephard, to John Major's Cabinet on the Saturday after the 1992 general election. Their appointments were notable to this junior civil servant, working in No. 10 at the time, because they were the first female Conservative Cabinet Ministers, except for the Prime Minister herself, since my hugely respected predecessor Baroness Young, the first ever female Leader of the Lords, had stood down in 1983. Both my noble friends served in Cabinet continuously until the next general election, but they were the only two women around the table for the whole five years of that Conservative Government. I am pleased to say that now, in stark contrast to back then, there are 10 of us.

I also congratulate my noble friend Lord Finkelstein. I knew of course that he would deliver an insightful and funny speech because I had the pleasure of working alongside him in Conservative Central Office in the late 1990s. At the time, the Conservative Party existed on a shoestring. Indeed, I am sure that my noble friend still remembers the queue to use the only internet-enabled computer in the Conservative research department at the time—although I have to say I do not remember him ever standing in that queue—or the strict rationing of pizza and Diet Cokes as the team worked late into the night on big speeches. The dark days of opposition were grim but no job was too big or too small for my noble friend. Whether it was preventing the defection to Labour of the man in the chicken suit or coming up with our election strategy—I have to say that that one worked better on paper than it did in practice—my noble friend was a constant source of advice, fun and friendship, and has been ever since.

Before I invite the House to look ahead to this Parliament, I think it worth having a glance back at all that we achieved in the last one, because over the past five years noble Lords continued to demonstrate the valuable role that this House played in our parliamentary process. From banking reform to modern slavery and from welfare and education reform to the further devolution of powers to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, our scrutiny and debates helped improve outcomes for the people affected by the laws that Parliament passed.

Just as importantly for the legitimacy of our work, in the previous Parliament we started to change the way that we are accountable to the public we serve. By allowing Members to resign permanently, Peers can now retire when they decide that they can no longer contribute in the way they feel the public have a right to expect. Like my noble friend Lady Bottomley, I pay tribute to the example set by those who have done just that.

The noble Baroness, Lady Royall, referred to the size of this House, but more important to me is how we are accountable. In my view, we owe it to the public to continue in that spirit: looking for further ways to strengthen our accountability while we remain an unelected House, and that is something on which I hope we can focus our energies during this Parliament.

The general election changed the political map in this country but not the party balance within this House. As a result, we can expect far more focus on events in this Chamber during this Parliament. However, that is not really why attention should turn our way. In my view, attention should turn our way because of the talented people on all Benches and all sides of this House. We have some brilliant expertise in this House and that is what should make the world turn around and take notice of what we do.

I am really excited about our new ministerial team. Alongside the long-standing experience of my noble friends—many references have already been made to the appointment of my noble friend Lord Howe as Deputy Leader, and I am hugely grateful that he has decided to accept that appointment—I am delighted to welcome new world-leading experts such as my noble friend Lady Shields, who will be taking forward our efforts to protect children online, and Jim O'Neill, who is at the centre of our work to build a northern powerhouse. In addition, others already on my Bench here and other new noble Lords are joining the team. Together, the Ministers in this House are setting the agenda in this country and further afield. That speaks volumes about our ability to refresh and renew our expertise and about the impact that Members of this House can have.

For our work truly to connect with people, we must accept the limits of our role, respecting the primacy of the House of Commons and allowing the elected House to lead the way. Our conventions, as we have already heard today, and the way that we work can guide us in that task. They ensure that we scrutinise. Yes, we hold the Government to account and sometimes we ask the House of Commons to think again, but those conventions also ensure that we do not block the will of the other place, and nowhere is that more clear or more important than in the Salisbury/Addison convention, which has enabled minority Governments in the House of Lords to secure their business without conflict between the two Houses.

I was pleased to hear the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, confirm her party's support for that convention, and I was pleased, I think, to hear the noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace, confirm his party's support for it, because these conventions are important. Whether it be considering government business in reasonable time or respecting the long-established financial privilege of the House of Commons, our conventions and the way that we work enable us to take seriously our responsibilities to the public and the mandate they have provided—a mandate that applies whether individuals among us care for a piece of legislation or not. I noted what the noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace, said about the mandate that my party secured at the last general election but I very much disagree with him. It is a very, very strong mandate that we have been given to govern this country for the five years ahead.

While the last five years were about economic recovery, this time our task is about renewal: renewing the idea that we are one nation in which all people can succeed, where social justice is at the heart of our public services and where the ties that bind all parts of our nation are strong. Our legislative programme for this

Session is the first step in achieving that. Our programme will make Britain a place where everyone who is willing to work hard and do the right thing can enjoy a good life. This means giving everyone in our country the purpose and pride of a job and the security of a home of their own. We will also continue reforming welfare and education so that everyone, especially the most disadvantaged, is able to get on and succeed on their own terms. As the party of one nation, we will ensure that opportunities are not limited by where you live. We will work to bring our United Kingdom of four nations together—the noble and learned Lord was right, as were my noble friends who mentioned the United Kingdom, to say that the continuation of it is essential to our success. Beyond that, we will also create the northern powerhouse to close to north/south divide.

With that last aim in mind, we will tomorrow introduce a cities and local government devolution Bill in this House. I might call it, even if the clerks will not, the northern powerhouse Bill. Three further Bills are also due to start their passage through Parliament in this House in the coming days: the childcare Bill, which will help working people by increasing the provision of free childcare; the charities Bill; and the psychoactive substances Bill. I have no doubt that this House will bring its customary wisdom and experience to bear as it scrutinises and debates those measures and other Bills that will start in the Commons—from what has been said today, it is clear that many noble Lords are looking forward to the arrival of the European Union referendum Bill.

In short, there is a great deal to look forward to. We are about to start work and, as one of my predecessors used to say, we will see how we get on. This time last year, my noble friend Lord Hill expressed the shared desire of this House to keep the United Kingdom together. Then, we faced a once-in-a-generation referendum, when the people of Scotland clearly stated their view that we are better together. Now, we have the opportunity to repay that faith and show just how much we can achieve as one nation. I look forward to working with those on all Benches as this House plays its part. There are challenges to come, of that I am sure, but I have no doubt that we will rise to them and show why we are rightly all proud to be Members of your Lordships' House. I am pleased to support the Motion of the noble Baroness to adjourn the debate.

Motion agreed.

Chairman of Committees

4.57 pm

Moved by Baroness Stowell of Beeston

That the noble Lord, Lord Sewel, be appointed to take the Chair in all Committees of the House for this Session.

Motion agreed nemine dissentiente.

Principal Deputy Chairman of Committees

4.57 pm

Moved by **Baroness Stowell of Beeston**

That the noble Lord, Lord Boswell of Aynho, be appointed Principal Deputy Chairman of Committees for this Session.

Motion agreed nemine dissentiente.

Stoppages in the Streets

It was ordered that the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis do take care that the passages through the streets leading to this House be kept free and open and that no obstruction be permitted to hinder the passage of Lords to and from this House during the sitting of Parliament; or to hinder Lords in the pursuit of their parliamentary duties on the Parliamentary Estate; and that the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod attending this House do communicate this Order to the Commissioner.

Members of the House

It was ordered that a list of Members of the House, prepared by the Clerk of the Parliaments, be printed.

Hereditary Peers: By-elections

The Clerk of the Parliaments laid before the House, in accordance with Standing Order 10(5), a register of hereditary peers (other than peers of Ireland) who wish to stand in any by-election for membership of the House held in accordance with section 2(4) of the House of Lords Act 1999; it was ordered that the register be published.

Registration of Interests

It was ordered that the Register of Lords' Interests be published.

Code of Conduct

It was ordered that the House of Lords Code of Conduct and Guide to the Code be published.

Companion to the Standing Orders

The 24th edition of the Companion to the Standing Orders and Guide to the Proceedings of the House of Lords was laid on the Table by the Clerk of the Parliaments. It was ordered that the Companion to the Standing Orders be printed.

House adjourned at 4.58 pm.

CONTENTS

Wednesday 27 May 2015

Queen's Speech	5
Retirements of Members	
<i>Announcement</i>	7
Select Vestries Bill	
<i>First Reading</i>	7
Queen's Speech	
<i>Debate (1st Day)</i>	8
Chairman of Committees	26
Principal Deputy Chairman of Committees	27
