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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)

**HOUSE OF LORDS**  
**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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The first time a Member speaks to a new piece of parliamentary business, the following abbreviations are used to show their party affiliation:

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

Tuesday, 2 June 2015.

2.30 pm

*Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Norwich.*

### Introduction: Lord Bridges of Headley

2.39 pm

*James George Robert Bridges MBE, having been created Baron Bridges of Headley, of Headley Heath in the County of Surrey, was introduced and took the oath, supported by Lord Strathclyde and Baroness Hogg, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.*

### Introduction: Lord Prior of Brampton

2.44 pm

*The Honourable David Gifford Leathes Prior, having been created Baron Prior of Brampton, of Swannington in the County of Norfolk, was introduced and took the oath, supported by Lord Hamilton of Epsom and Lord Kakkar, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.*

### Oaths and Affirmations

2.48 pm

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

### Death of a Member: Lord Griffiths

*Announcement*

2.51 pm

**The Lord Speaker (Baroness D'Souza):** My Lords, I regret to inform the House of the death of the noble and learned Lord, Lord Griffiths, on 30 May. On behalf of the House, I extend our condolences to the noble and learned Lord's family and friends.

### Airports: London

*Question*

2.52 pm

*Asked by Lord Spicer*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the recent statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that Sir Howard Davies' recommendations for London's airports should be accepted, what assessment they have made of proposals to develop an airport in the Thames estuary already discounted by Sir Howard's commission.

### The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport and Home Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon)

**(Con):** My Lords, as my right honourable friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer indicated at the CBI annual dinner on 20 May, when the Government receive the Airports Commission's final report, we will take the decision to address the country's aviation capacity requirements. We will consider the commission's full body of work, including its conclusions on the Thames estuary, and decide how and at what pace to respond to any recommendation that the commission may make.

**Lord Spicer (Con):** My Lords, the Government could have said that they have no plans to build what would be one of the largest airports in the world, and stick it in the middle of one of the best and most famous rivers in the world. They could have said whether that is their position but they have not done so, and therefore I have to ask the Minister: why?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** It was the previous Government who set up the Airports Commission to explore all options and it is right that we wait until it has produced its report. I say to my noble friend that perhaps he will not have to wait much longer.

**Lord Clinton-Davis (Lab):** If British aviation is to thrive, does the Minister not agree that an early decision about the siting of our airports is absolutely essential? He has not said anything about when the Government will make up their mind. It is all very well to wait for a report, but does he not have some indication already about the suitability of Gatwick or Heathrow? I personally support Heathrow but it is vital that we do something about that, and do it quickly.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Government recognise the challenge of capacity and the need to make a decision, but it is also right that if you set up a commission, you wait for its result—its independent decision—and act accordingly. As I said in my opening remarks, and as my right honourable friend the Chancellor has said, as soon as the report has been received the Government will seek to make their decision on the recommendations that they receive.

**Lord Hylton (CB):** What consideration, if any, is being given to the development of Filton aerodrome in Bristol as an international airport, given that it was large enough to take Concorde jets and that it has excellent communication by rail to London?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The noble Lord raises important points. Our regional airports and our regional aviation capacity are an important part of the overall offering of UK plc. Certainly we are working across the country to ensure that all airports reach their true potential and that the UK is, as it rightly should be, a place where people come to do business for the right reasons. We shall be looking at all our airport capacity across the country. I will certainly take back to the department the mention he made of Bristol.

**Lord Tebbit (Con):** My Lords, are the Government not aware that a decision is being taken currently and has been taking place for some time? The traffic is going to Schiphol and Frankfurt, so we had better get a move on or it will all have gone there and we shall have only a local, European airport at London.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** When my noble friend says that we should get a move on, I always seek to act accordingly. As I said previously, the report is due shortly. However, I would just say to my noble friend that the UK remains, after the US and China, the third-largest area in terms of aviation, which is something we seek to protect and develop. Indeed, London currently provides connections to 360 destinations weekly across the world, which is unrivalled across Europe.

**Lord Davies of Oldham (Lab):** My Lords, the block on getting a move on was clearly the general election. The noble Lord may have noticed that that is now over, so we can expect an early decision on this issue. Will the Minister confirm that it is government policy that the only runway that will be approved and developed in this Parliament will be that recommended by the Davies commission, whose report we all await, and that there are no circumstances in which the Government would approve expansion in any area which Davies does not recommend?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** As I have said already, we will await the report of the commission. I am mindful of the fact that the noble Lord said that after the election, an incoming Labour Government would consider the report. I am delighted to say that, as the whole House and indeed the whole country recognises, it is an incoming and new Conservative Government who will be acting on the report.

**Baroness Finlay of Llandaff (CB):** Could the Minister inform the House whether there have been discussions with the National Assembly for Wales over the development of Cardiff Airport, given that its runway is large enough to take jumbos and that the engine-servicing facility at Caerphilly has been there for some time?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** As I have already said, regional airports are part and parcel of the offering, but on that specific issue I will write to the noble Baroness.

**Lord Bradshaw (LD):** Will the Minister tell us, when the commission reports and makes whatever recommendation it makes, what further legal steps are necessary before anybody can start work?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Once we have received the commission's report, the Government will consider its recommendations and report accordingly. In terms of specific legal steps, that obviously depends on what option is pursued. That will be made clearer once the commission's report has been published.

**Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe (Lab):** My Lords, would the noble Lord answer the question that was posed by my Front Bench?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** One part of the question was about the new Government, which is a Conservative one—and we will act in accordance with the commission's report. It is somewhat incredible for noble Lords opposite to suggest that after the Government have commissioned an independent report, which is due imminently, we should not actually wait for its recommendations. We will not have to wait long.

**Lord West of Spithead (Lab):** My Lords, 99 years and two days ago, Admiral Jellicoe made a decision in less than a minute to deploy 28 battleships on the right flank, which stopped him losing a battle which could have lost the war for Britain. Six years does seem an incredibly long time, with all this information, to make a decision which seems fairly straightforward in reality.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** I always find the noble Lord's lessons in history extremely enlightening. As I said, we will wait for the report; once it is published, the Government will respond accordingly.

**Lord Harris of Haringey (Lab):** Could the Minister try to answer the question? If the Davies commission recommends only one new runway, will that be the only runway that the Government consider or are there other runways that might go forward as well?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** My Lords, patience is a virtue, and I would ask the noble Lord to be patient. The commission is going to report very shortly and he will have his answer then—and the Government's support accordingly.

## Humanist Marriages *Question*

3 pm

*Asked by Baroness Thornton*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to give legal recognition to humanist marriages in England and Wales, and if so, by what date.

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Lord Faulks) (Con):** My Lords, the previous Government consulted on whether the law should be changed to allow non-religious belief organisations, including humanists, to conduct legal marriages. They concluded that there were broader implications for marriage law and asked the Law Commission whether it would conduct a review of the law on marriage ceremonies. The Law Commission is now undertaking a preliminary scoping study and is due to report by December. The Government will then consider the next steps.

**Baroness Thornton (Lab):** It is quite remarkable that the Government felt that humanist marriages were such a threat that they had to call in the Law Commission

to do their work. I do not think that the Minister's explanation is really very convincing. Why should the review delay humanist marriages, given that legal recognition is a simple measure, as has been proved in Scotland? Would he care to write and explain to my children why they would have to go to Scotland if they wished to have a legally recognised humanist marriage ceremony?

**Lord Faulks:** As the noble Baroness and the House will be aware, there is nothing to prevent humanists getting married and then having a humanist ceremony.

**Baroness Thornton:** In two ceremonies!

**Lord Faulks:** The quarrel, as I understand it—if the noble Baroness will allow me to continue—is that it is felt that both those ceremonies should take place at the same time. There having been a consultation, there was no consensus across the key stakeholders. The consultation raises a number of significant issues of a broader nature; in particular, the National Panel for Registration was concerned about the risk of forced and sham marriages. That is also a concern, incidentally, in Scotland, where there is a different system, based on the celebrant rather than the registration buildings and where there is also concern and a consultation about that very issue.

**Baroness Meacher (CB):** During the 10 years of humanist marriages in Scotland, some 20,000 such marriages have taken place, which is more than the number of Catholic marriages and, by the end of the year, will number more than Church of Scotland marriages. Will the Minister agree to look into the popular demand for such marriages in England and Wales with a view to implementing the legislation that the previous Government passed, on the assumption of a recommendation to implement by the Law Commission?

**Lord Faulks:** I can assure the noble Baroness that the Law Commission will talk to officials in Scotland on the issue as part of its scoping work on marriage law reform in England and Wales. In Scotland, Ministers were concerned about the qualifying requirements for a celebrant; they are concerned about the reputation, dignity and solemnity of marriage as well as combating sham marriages and civil partnerships. Although, of course, it must be immensely frustrating for those who want a humanist marriage at the same time as the celebration, this is part of an overall consideration by the Government as to the way forward.

**Baroness Warsi (Con):** My Lords, the practice of polygamy is a growing issue in the United Kingdom. Will my noble friend confirm that an Islamic marriage in the United Kingdom is not legally recognised and say what the Government intend to do to move towards legal recognition? That would provide essential protection specifically for women on the breakdown of that marriage and would also, as a by-product, deal with the issue of bigamy.

**Lord Faulks:** My noble friend is no doubt correct about the real worry of polygamy. Certainly, that is a matter of concern for the Government. We are looking, as I indicated generally, at what is necessary to have appropriate formalities as to marriage, and I shall convey my noble friend's concern to the Government.

**Baroness Hussein-Ece (LD):** Will the Minister say whether there are any practical barriers to the legalisation of humanist marriages? After all, at the other end of the spectrum people are perfectly free to have humanist funerals. I have been to quite a few very moving ceremonies. Surely couples who want a humanist celebration of their marriage should be allowed that freedom of choice.

**Lord Faulks:** There are limited legal requirements in relation to the registration of death, and anyone is free to mark the passing of an individual by whatever means they like, including in a humanist ceremony. For many hundreds of years marriage in England and Wales has been based on having taken place in a registered building, and there needs to be serious thought about the implications of changing the law.

**Lord Hughes of Woodside (Lab):** In his earlier reply, the Minister said that “key stakeholders”—plural—were being consulted. Since this refers to humanist marriages, who other than humanists are key stakeholders in this issue?

**Lord Faulks:** Certainly humanists are key stakeholders. They took a significant part in the consultation. More than 60% of responses were from humanists or individuals who responded as part of a perfectly appropriate campaign, and I can assure the noble Lord that they will be consulted.

**Lord Cormack (Con):** My Lords, as a Christian who found the changes we made to the meaning of marriage in the previous Parliament somewhat difficult, I completely accept that the law has now been changed. I find it difficult to understand any logical objection to what the noble Baroness is calling for this afternoon. I hope that we can have an early decision on this and hope that my noble friend can reassure me.

**Baroness Whitaker (Lab):** My Lords—

**Lord Faulks:** I understand what my noble friend says about the approach to marriage which this House approved in the Marriages (Same Sex Couples) Act. It was a significant achievement of the Government. I understand the sense of frustration that he may feel that the Government are not moving swiftly enough. I assure my noble friend that while due speed will be shown in looking at this, because of the wider implications, it is necessary to consider this matter thoroughly.

**Baroness Whitaker:** My Lords, I apologise for my eagerness to ask the Minister my question, which may have seemed discourteous. Does he not recall that there was a substantial measure of support for the legal recognition

[BARONESS WHITAKER]

of humanist marriage and does he not therefore think it would be just to allow it the same grace that is allowed to the Jewish and Quaker communities?

**Lord Faulks:** The exception for the Jewish and Quaker communities is based on the state of affairs in 1753. I agree that there are certain anomalies based on historical facts. There is no feeling on the part of the Government to discriminate against humanist marriages. It is simply a question of looking at the matter overall so that we can make our law consistent.

## Industry: International Investment

### Question

3.08 pm

*Asked by Lord Lea of Crondall*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the United Kingdom's market share of international investment in the manufacturing and service industries under the European Union's existing regulatory regime.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Departments for Business, Innovation and Skills and for Culture, Media and Sport (Baroness Neville-Rolfe) (Con):** My Lords, the UK has cemented its strong position for attracting foreign direct investment in Europe, being ranked by the OECD as the number one destination in 2014. The OECD's estimates show that the UK received \$72 billion of foreign direct investment flows.

**Lord Lea of Crondall (Lab):** I thank the Minister for that reply. This illustrates that under the existing EU rules—and I could say the same about other matters under the existing rules—Germany and France have 25% higher productivity than we do. German exports are three times greater than ours. It is therefore not the so-called EU red tape that stops them doing that. That leads to two questions. First, is it not clear that our economic redemption in this country lies in our own hands even under, broadly, the existing EU rules, which we played a major part in writing?

Secondly, in order that the debate on the referendum on us staying in or getting out is evidence-based rather than just claim and counterclaim, not least on the impact of international investment, do Her Majesty's Government agree that our electorate are entitled to hear objective assessments from a body such as the Office for Budget Responsibility rather than simply leaving them at the mercy of the objectivity of the *Daily Mail*?

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** My Lords, improving productivity is indeed one of the key economic challenges for this Parliament. By the Budget, we will have published our productivity plan. Evidence is always useful and important in public policy, but the EU needs to change and become more competitive and the Prime Minister is determined to deliver that through the referendum that we promised to the British people.

**Baroness Kramer (LD):** My Lords, this House will be aware that many small and medium-sized British companies depend on being the supply chain to foreign-owned companies located in the UK because of our membership of the EU. Is the Minister able to give me an assessment of their contribution to our GDP and how much would be at risk if we were to leave the EU?

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** The noble Baroness makes a very important point about the supply chain. The truth is that there are not a lot of data on these sorts of things, but I will take away the point that she makes and perhaps talk to her further about it.

**Lord Hannay of Chiswick (CB):** My Lords, would the Minister be very kind and answer the final part of the question from the noble Lord, Lord Lea, which was what intention the Government have of providing objective information to the electorate on a whole range of issues relating to the forthcoming referendum, of which this is an important one? What are they actually going to do about it, given that there is no legal base for providing that information in the referendum Bill?

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** As noble Lords will have seen, the Prime Minister has already started to discuss his plans for reform and renegotiation with his EU colleagues and associated analysis. We expect to set out some further details at the European Council meeting at the end of June.

**Lord Mendelsohn (Lab):** Does the Minister agree with me that the UK's long-term performance under successive Governments in attracting foreign direct investment has been vital? Given that the increase in FDI in the last five years has grown faster than the UK economy and GDP per head, does she agree that this recent performance raises questions about the potential contribution of foreign direct investment to UK economic performance? Could she explain why we appear to see very little impact on productivity from rising levels of foreign direct investment and what changes are required to the inward investment strategy?

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** The noble Lord is right to congratulate the country on the improvements in foreign direct investment. One should pay tribute to companies such as Nissan, Tata and a whole load of smaller companies for coming to the UK, taking advantage of our flexibilities and low tax rates to do so.

The issue of productivity is a bit of a dilemma, which is why my right honourable friend the Chancellor has said that he will publish a productivity plan to make Britain work better, building on the good start made in education and skills, deregulation and so on that we discussed in the previous Parliament.

**Lord Pearson of Rannoch (UKIP):** My Lords, will the Minister confirm that over the years neither the department of trade nor the "invest in Britain" agency has given membership of the European Union as one of the 14 reasons to invest in this country? The reasons

given are more likely to be language, time zone, educated workforce et cetera. Is it not true that foreign investors and indeed clients know that if we left the EU our trade with it would continue, if only because we are its largest client?

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** I note with interest what the noble Lord says, and I agree that all the things he has listed are vital reasons as to why people want to invest in Britain. We have unique labour flexibility, it is easy to set up business here compared with other countries—as I know from having been a business person for 17 years—and we have a good, welcoming tax regime and very good education.

**Lord Forsyth of Drumlean (Con):** My Lords, does my noble friend not accept that it would be a good idea to provide objective information so that we can have a sensible debate in the forthcoming referendum? Should we not be conscious that the scaremongering tactics that were used in the Scottish referendum proved deeply counterproductive, and that those who wish to remain in the European Union would be wise not to spread the myth that Britain cannot survive alone, using its relationships with the Commonwealth and elsewhere to maintain our prosperity and employment?

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** My Lords, my noble friend makes many good points, some of which I agree with. I look forward to further debates on these issues in the coming weeks and months.

**Lord Brookman (Lab):** My Lords, not everything in the garden is as rosy as the Minister has pronounced. Tata Steel, which she mentioned earlier, is withdrawing pensions from its employees, which did not come in for blue-collar workers until 1973, so there will be a call for strike action for the first time in many years in that vital industry. Not everything is perfect at the moment.

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** I agree with the noble Lord that the car industry is vital, and I have been very much encouraged by how it has been changed and revived due to foreign investment but also to the brilliance and innovation of our country. There are always issues as industries change, and he rightly highlights one of them.

## FIFA Question

3.16 pm

*Asked by Lord Moynihan*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the recent arrests of FIFA officials relating to charges of corruption.

**The Earl of Courtown (Con):** My Lords, Her Majesty's Government welcome the investigations that are now under way into the allegations of bribery and corruption. These revelations have shown how important it is for sports bodies to uphold the highest standards of governance, transparency and accountability. International

bodies should be no different, and that is particularly true for an organisation such as FIFA. The Government also fully back the FA's position that change and reform are urgently needed at the top of FIFA, including its leadership.

**Lord Moynihan (Con):** My Lords, will my noble friend agree that resolving the crisis of governance in FIFA can best be achieved through its pockets, and where individuals are guilty of corruption, through prison? Will he ask his right honourable friend the Secretary of State to call in the FIFA sponsors which have significant business interests in the United Kingdom and to make absolutely clear to them the importance of adopting FTSE 100 governance standards when determining investments in FIFA? Does he agree that such action is preferable to resorting to boycotts of major sporting events, which will principally serve to damage home nation footballers and fans of the game, not least because some prominent European delegates voted in favour of Sepp Blatter's re-election?

**The Earl of Courtown:** My Lords, I thank my noble friend for those questions. He mentioned first a factor relating to sponsors, and I will certainly raise it with my right honourable friend the Secretary of State. As my noble friend will be aware, my right honourable friend has already spoken of the need for sponsors to consider the reputational risk of continued association with FIFA, as well as the strong message it will send FIFA if they withdraw. Although that is ultimately a decision for the sponsors, I am sure they will not be in any doubt about the Government's view of FIFA under Blatter's leadership. My noble friend also mentioned a boycott of the World Cup. We agree that withdrawal from FIFA competitions by the FA should not happen at the expense of the players and fans, particularly if such a boycott is unlikely to achieve the aims of bringing reform to FIFA.

**Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab):** My Lords, I agree totally with the noble Lord's stressing of the importance of sponsorship. Yesterday the Secretary of State said in the other place that no options should be ruled out at this stage. Why cannot the Government therefore agree with my honourable friend's recommendation in the other place that there should be an urgent summit that would bring together the football authorities, the British sponsors and, more importantly, the broadcasters?

**The Earl of Courtown:** I thank the noble Lord for that question, which I think he asked yesterday, and I am afraid he is going to get a similar answer today. We do have this common position with all the parties involved that change is needed in FIFA, including at the very top. We will continue to work with sponsors, the home nation Football Association and our counterparts in Europe. I must add that my right honourable friend the Secretary of State spoke to Mr Greg Dyke last week and yesterday, and he will do so again before Mr Dyke goes to Germany for the Champions League final next weekend, when there will be a congress before the match.

**Lord Clark of Windermere (Lab):** My Lords, does the Minister agree that it is absolutely right to press for reform of FIFA? Does he recognise that one of FIFA's successes is the development of soccer in Asia and Africa? Will he ensure that any reform does not lead to a retrenchment in that respect, because there is a sign in this country that football is becoming more a business than a sport?

**The Earl of Courtown:** My Lords, the noble Lord is quite correct. The Government's view is that reform of FIFA is urgently needed, as I said before, but it should not be, and it is not, at the expense of football development across the world. That would suggest that only Sepp Blatter can develop football, and not others; that is clearly not the case. I should also like to highlight the fantastic work that the FA and the Premiership are doing overseas to develop the game at grass-roots level.

**Baroness Doocey (LD):** My Lords—

**Viscount Ridley (Con):** My Lords—

**The Lord Privy Seal (Baroness Stowell of Beeston) (Con):** My Lords, we have not yet heard from the Liberal Democrat Benches, so on this occasion we should hear from the noble Baroness, Lady Doocey.

**Baroness Doocey:** My Lords, earlier this year I made a very modest transfer to my son's account in New York, using one of the banks mentioned in the US indictment. I had to jump through hoops in order to persuade the bank that this was a legitimate transaction. Can the Minister assure the House that the Serious Fraud Office will conduct a forensic investigation into why vast sums of money were paid to corrupt FIFA officials via the British banking system, without any alarm bells seemingly being sounded in any of the banks concerned?

**The Earl of Courtown:** The noble Baroness is quite right—sometimes, when an individual wants to make a bank transfer between different countries, they do have to jump through hoops. Yes, noble Lords can rest assured that the SFO is taking a keen interest in what is happening. It has not opened a formal criminal investigation, but it continues actively to assess material in its possession.

### **Advertising of Prostitution (Prohibition) Bill [HL]** *First Reading*

3.23 pm

*A Bill to prohibit the advertising of prostitution; and for connected purposes.*

*The Bill was introduced by Baroness Howe of Idlicote (on behalf of Lord McColl of Dulwich), read a first time and ordered to be printed.*

### **Succession to Peerages Bill [HL]** *First Reading*

3.23 pm

*A Bill to amend the law regarding succession to peerages; and for connected purposes.*

*The Bill was introduced by Lord Trefgarne, read a first time and ordered to be printed.*

### **Age of Criminal Responsibility Bill [HL]** *First Reading*

3.23 pm

*A Bill to raise the age of criminal responsibility; and for connected purposes.*

*The Bill was introduced by Lord Dholakia, read a first time and ordered to be printed.*

### **Mesothelioma (Amendment) Bill [HL]** *First Reading*

3.24 pm

*A Bill to amend the Mesothelioma Act 2014.*

*The Bill was introduced by Lord Alton of Liverpool, read a first time and ordered to be printed.*

### **Planning (Subterranean Development) Bill [HL]** *First Reading*

3.24 pm

*A Bill to make provision for the presumption against the granting of planning permission in respect of subterranean development where certain conditions apply; and for connected purposes.*

*The Bill was introduced by Lord Dubs, read a first time and ordered to be printed.*

### **Queen's Speech** *Debate (4th Day)*

3.24 pm

*Moved on Monday 28 June 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”.



**Lord Ashton of Hyde (Con):** My Lords, before we hear my noble friend's opening speech, I remind the House that there is an advisory speaking time of seven minutes. Last night we finished at 10 minutes to midnight because not every noble Lord abided by the advisory speaking time. Therefore, I ask—perhaps plead with—noble Lords to pay attention to this advisory time.

3.25 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government (Baroness Williams of Trafford) (Con):** My Lords, it is a privilege to open this debate following Her Majesty's gracious Speech. I do so with the added honour of being able to speak from the Dispatch Box and address this House for the first time since I took up a position as a Minister in this Government. I am confident of a constructive and lively debate on local government, home affairs, energy, the environment and agriculture, and I look forward to the maiden speeches of the noble Lord, Lord Kerslake, and the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Salisbury and to the valedictory speech of my noble friend Lord Eden. I also extend my congratulations to the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, on her appointment as Leader of the Opposition in this House.

**Noble Lords:** Hear, hear!

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** I turn, first, to the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, covering local government, devolution within England and housing.

In order to boost economic growth and rebalance the economy, closing the decades-old economic gap between the north and the south, the gracious Speech includes a Bill to deliver radical devolution to the great cities of England. The Bill will put in place the primary legislative framework to enable us to deliver deals devolving major powers to cities, alongside providing for a metro mayor to act as a powerful point of accountability. This will include delivering the historic deal for Greater Manchester. These deals will allow cities to take greater control of and responsibility for the key things that make a city work, be it transport, skills or housing, and boost local growth. In conjunction with existing legislation, this will also allow us to empower our towns and counties with devolution deals across the country, helping to create thousands of jobs for people and greater prosperity for the areas.

The gracious Speech also includes a Bill to support home ownership and give more people the chance to own their own home. This Bill is a key part of delivering the ambitious housing package in the Government's manifesto. It will extend the right-to-buy levels of discount to housing association tenants, helping thousands of people and families who aspire to home ownership. To date, more than 33,000 new homeowners have been created since the right-to-buy scheme was reinvigorated in 2012, and every additional home sold is being replaced with a new affordable home for a social tenant. This has ensured that more council housing has been built since 2010 than in the previous 13 years.

The Bill will also take forward a range of measures to increase the supply of housing. It will reform the statutory planning framework to support the delivery of 200,000 starter homes, to be made available to

first-time buyers under 40. The Bill will bring forward measures to require local authorities to dispose of high-value vacant council houses as they become vacant to fund new affordable homes, simplify and speed up the neighbourhood planning process, and take forward the right-to-build scheme and statutory register of brownfield land.

With almost 90% of people aspiring to own their own home—a percentage that has been steady for more than two decades—it is right that the Government take action to encourage and enable home ownership. I know that there is a range of views across this House on the merits of these ideas but we must be of one mind that home ownership should not be a distant dream for our children.

I will move on to matters of home affairs and turn to the counterextremism Bill. Our pluralistic values make Britain a great place to live. They mean that we are free to live how we choose, wear what we choose, worship according to our beliefs and take advantage of our world-class education and employment opportunities. Extremists try to undermine these values. Their poisonous views have no place in modern Britain. We will no longer tolerate those who promote hatred, intolerance and division. We will create a new partnership of every person and organisation in this country to defeat them. I am sure that the whole House will join me in deploring the fact that, in Britain today, people suffer hatred and violence because of their race, religion or sexuality; women are denied equal access to rights that most take for granted; and children are taught to despise the values that we should be proud to live by. That is why the Government are taking forward a comprehensive new counterextremism strategy to defeat all forms of extremism, violent and non-violent, Islamist and neo-Nazi. As part of our strategy, the gracious Speech contains a counterextremism Bill, which will strengthen our powers to confront extremism and protect the public.

I turn now to the immigration Bill. To cut net migration we need to ensure that we have a tough system that does not tolerate illegal migration. The successful implementation of the Immigration Act 2014 has already started to have a positive impact. More than 800 foreign criminals are being deported under the “deport now, appeal later” measures, and the introduction of the immigration health surcharge means that migrants are now making a direct financial contribution to the NHS. The immigration Bill will build on these reforms to complete the work of strengthening our controls against illegal immigration and supporting working people.

The gracious Speech also contained a commitment to bring forward legislation on communications data. As your Lordships will be aware, this is unfinished business from the previous Parliament. The legislation will cover the full range of investigatory powers and build on the review that has been undertaken by the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, David Anderson QC. His report will be published shortly and the Government will want to reflect upon it, as I am sure will all noble Lords. There will be a full consultation on the legislation and this is a matter of the greatest importance. We must ensure that law enforcement and intelligence officers have the tools that they need to keep the public safe.

[BARONESS WILLIAMS OF TRAFFORD]

The gracious Speech includes a Bill introduced in your Lordships' House last Thursday to provide for a blanket ban on the supply of new psychoactive substances. During the previous Parliament, we took a number of significant steps to tackle the harms caused by these unknown and untested substances. In particular, we strengthened the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 to provide for temporary class drug orders. Using these and other powers in the Act, we banned more than 500 new psychoactive substances. However, with these existing powers we are always playing catch-up, banning new psychoactive substances on a reactive, substance-by-substance basis, while the suppliers always stay one step ahead and create new substances outside existing controls. The introduction of a blanket ban in the Bill will ensure that law enforcement agencies have the necessary criminal and civil powers to put an end to this trade and protect our young people from the harm caused by these untested, unregulated substances.

The gracious Speech includes a Bill to reform the police and criminal justice system. We are all fortunate in this country to have the finest police men and women in the world, who, on a daily basis, put their personal safety on the line to protect ours. During the last Government, we took steps to make the police more transparent and more accountable to their communities. In this Parliament, we want to finish the job. The Bill will reform the police complaints and disciplinary systems; it will put a stop to people remaining on bail for months or even years with no independent oversight; it will ensure that 17 year-olds who are detained in police custody are treated as children for all purposes under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984; and it will improve the response to those experiencing mental health conditions.

These measures will ensure that the police are more accountable for the decisions they take. They will ensure that the public are able to act when they feel that the police fall short of the standards that they expect. They will ensure that police honesty and integrity are protected, and that corruption and misconduct are rooted out. The Bill will continue to reform the criminal justice system to protect the public better, build confidence and improve efficiency.

Finally, on important matters of the UK's energy supply, the gracious Speech includes an energy Bill. The Bill will give the Oil and Gas Authority the powers it needs to become a robust, independent and effective regulator. It will ensure that the UK's continental shelf resources are developed and key infrastructure is well managed to secure the maximum amount of economically recoverable oil and gas from UK waters.

The energy Bill will also make changes in relation to new onshore wind farm applications. The majority of the population does not live in the vicinity of a wind farm. For those who do, we have seen many examples of local community groups vigorously opposing wind farm developments for a variety of reasons. The energy Bill will give local authorities and local people more power to decide whether a wind farm is built in their area.

The measures set out by Her Majesty last week will help this Government support working people, keep Britain on the road to economic recovery and give everyone the best chance of living a fulfilling and good life.

3.36 pm

**Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab):** My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness for her kind comments and welcome her to her new position. She and I spent many happy hours debating at the Dispatch Box and, listening to this list of Bills, I am sure that she has many happy hours ahead of her as well. We would have liked a little more detail on the extremism Bill and the housing Bill, but no doubt those will come during the debate.

Many commentators have referred to this Queen's Speech as the first from a new Conservative Government for 23 years. That may well be, but it fails to recognise how successful the Conservative Party was in getting its way during the coalition years. All of us remember the bedroom tax; the bargain-basement sale of Royal Mail; tax cuts for the wealthiest; and cuts in legal aid, including, most horribly, even for victims of domestic violence. We saw under the last Government the marketisation of our NHS, which paved the way for handing so much more of it into private hands, and the massive hike in tuition fees. So this Queen's Speech is not the first tentative steps of a party out of government for almost two decades, as some have reported, but it most certainly is the bold stride of a party that wants to build on the work that it has already started.

It is also a Queen's Speech from a party that faces a new challenge. For the first time in history, a Conservative Government do not have an automatic majority in your Lordships' House. To my colleagues on the Labour Benches, that does not sound too daunting: no Labour Government have ever had a majority in this Chamber, so we know what it is like. We know the challenges and responsibilities that it brings. During the last Labour Government, we lost around 500 Divisions—30% of all votes. In the last Parliament, with a significant coalition government majority, Ministers still lost 100 Divisions.

But we do not want to play the numbers game to see how many defeats we can now inflict on the Government with the new increase in opposition numbers. This Chamber, as we are all aware, is about far more than that. We are about ensuring better and more effective legislation. We are also about making sure that legislation is properly considered. We have a responsibility to ensure that our expertise is brought to bear on government proposals.

There will be times when we agree with the Government. There will be other times when the detail that we have is inadequate or insufficient and greater thought will have to be given to impact and implementation. There will be others still where we have a fundamental disagreement on principle.

On these Benches, we are used to working across the Chamber on issues of common interest to improve legislation. As the noble Lord, Lord Bates, knows from our debates over many hours, we have always been ready to discuss and negotiate—as indeed has he. It is not insignificant that when we debated the counterterrorism Bill in the last Parliament, the Government accepted or brought forward 40 amendments following weeks of debate in the other place where the Government resisted amendments including those that it accepted here in your Lordships' House.

As my noble friend Lady Royall made clear last week, we, as a responsible Opposition, will continue to respect the principles of the Salisbury convention. However, the Government have to recognise that this House will fulfil its obligation of scrutinising and revising legislation. There is a challenge here for Ministers. In the last Parliament we were too often disappointed by ministerial responses. Comforted by their political majority—with notable and very welcome exceptions—some Ministers failed to adequately explain, engage or properly answer questions. We heard some of that at Question Time today—and it cannot continue.

The role of scrutinising legislation and holding the Government to account is the primary focus of this House. As I have said, it is not merely a numbers game but the constitutional role of the second Chamber. David Cameron should not think that he can railroad ill-thought out, ineffective or damaging legislation by using his narrow Commons majority to ignore the views and guidance of this House. Neither should he seek to create an avalanche of more Peers to make up the perceived difference.

In many cases the Conservative manifesto contained inadequate detail for us to fully understand the exact intentions of the Bills being brought forward. A prime example is the much-touted £12 billion-worth of cuts to the social security budget. I read in the press today that Ministers are still arguing about where and when the axe is going to fall. Will it be on child benefit; housing benefits; disability benefits; or a cut in the carer's allowance? When is it going to happen? In two, three, four years' time? At some point the Government will need to work it out. I am confident that today's debate, with its impressive list of speakers, will identify a number of areas where the Government should welcome detailed scrutiny and seriously consider improvements.

Alongside the valedictory speech today of the noble Lord, Lord Eden, we will also hear maiden speeches from the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Salisbury and the noble Lord, Lord Kerslake, both of whom have valuable expertise—the right reverend Prelate through his work on homelessness and the noble Lord from his long-standing experience across the housing sector, including his time as head of the Homes and Communities Agency. The noble Lord has an insight into what our country needs in this key policy area. I look forward to his contribution and I hope that the Government will heed his wise advice.

This country needs a housing Bill, but the one being offered by the Government does nothing to address the greatest housing shortage for a generation. Ministers have to explain how forcing housing associations to sell off their stock at a knock-down discount is going to help those young people who fear that they will never have a home of their own, whether to rent or buy. This is not innovative thinking. This is a rehash of 1980s policy when times and circumstances were very different. When Margaret Thatcher introduced the right to buy for council housing, the waiting lists of those looking to rent were a fraction of what they are today. For those looking to buy, it was so much easier to get a mortgage, including from local councils, and it was still possible to earn an average wage and

buy a home. While those sales undoubtedly benefited some, it was, has been and continues to be a nightmare for others. So we need the detail. Will the Government learn from the mistakes of the past or merely repeat them?

On the environment, many of us remember the Prime Minister's pledge—probably in an overexuberant moment of delirium after he had hugged a husky—to be the greenest Government ever. Few believe he succeeded. The Queen's Speech does not demonstrate a commitment to tackling climate change or air pollution when the UK has one of the worst records of any EU country for exceeding pollution limits, putting thousands of lives at risk.

On agriculture, the absence of an effective food and farming strategy is very worrying. The farming industry makes an enormous contribution to our economy and it needs co-ordinated government support.

The noble Lord, Lord Bates, has proved himself to be a very hard-working Minister on Home Office legislation and he has his work cut out in this Parliament. On immigration, the Government will have to clarify how a number of proposals will work in practice. Of course we support measures to tackle illegal immigration and deport foreign criminals—but, again, the Government are tough on rhetoric and weak on action. What of that pledge to cut net migration? Not only does it exclude illegal immigration, but the Government's criteria would claim success when highly qualified professionals leave the UK to use their skills elsewhere and fee-paying foreign students choose not to come to the UK but instead go to study in China or the US. That would be a net fall in migration; a success for the Government, but of no help whatever to the UK or our economy.

In addition, around 500 fewer foreign criminals are being deported every year than under the last Labour Government, while at the same time we have seen substantial cuts in the UK Border Force. Mr Cameron may look very fetching to some in his police-issue Kevlar jacket as he joins the police on a raid to arrest exploited migrant workers, but that is no replacement for effective legislation. Many of these workers live in a twilight world of poverty and fear, and tackling that exploitation must be a priority, with action taken against those responsible. Legitimate, law-abiding businesses and local workers are paying the price for the Government's failure, so I ask Ministers: will the Government reconsider the proposals put forward by us in the last Parliament to tackle this issue?

We have an extremism Bill, and we all understand that extremist statements that incite, encourage and support violence are dangerous and divisive, and have no place in a civilised society. Tackling the issue demands wisdom as well as calm and intelligent thought. When debating the extremism Bill, we will need to give careful consideration to exactly what new powers are to be brought in; a clear definition of extremism, including who actually defines it; and to ensure that any laws are used only for the purposes for which they are intended. Ministers will have to clarify what action will be taken to strengthen the community-led prevention work that was cut during the last Parliament.

[BARONESS SMITH OF BASILDON]

We await the proposals, but perhaps I may highlight one serious issue, which is the commitment that Ofcom's role should be strengthened,

"so that tough measures can be taken against channels that broadcast extremist content".

That raises so many questions. I will look back and refer to the history of this. Most of us in this House will remember the 1988 regulations that banned the broadcasting of interviews with a number of organisations in Northern Ireland. Did it work? The broadcasters kept to the letter of the law, using actors to lip-sync to interviews. It was a farce and completely ineffective, and it was eventually dropped after six years.

On policing, we will challenge the Government to recognise the shocking impact of their policies during the last Parliament. The most senior counterterrorism officer in the UK, Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley, has warned that the loss of mainstream policing teams and cuts in neighbourhood policing undermine counterterrorism work. In Essex, we no longer have any 24-hour police stations—not one—and we have 600 fewer officers than in 2010. Close to my home in Basildon is a large, clear road sign directing residents to the local police station. I went to the opening not that long ago. But do not bother turning up today, because the sign has lasted longer than the police station, which is now closed. Under the Government of a party that claims to be the party of law and order, police morale has never been lower—and these are the men and women who we need and expect to be at the top of their game.

We must tackle extremism in all its forms, whether Islamist extremism linked to the rise of ISIL, hate crime, anti-Semitism or Islamophobia. But the measures must be proportionate and effective, with checks and balances to prevent abuse.

The Conservative manifesto stated:

"New legislation will modernise the law on communications data".

In the last Parliament, we debated and passed temporary emergency legislation on the collection and use of such data, then returned to the issue during the counterterrorism Bill. Some noble Lords will recall our criticisms of the Government in bringing forward inadequate, disproportionate and deeply flawed legislation at the start of the Parliament. Then, despite an excellent and balanced report from the Joint Committee, chaired by the noble Lord, Lord Blencathra, the Government failed to do anything to address the deficiencies in existing legislation.

Times have changed. Some people may look back with nostalgia to the Cold War, but the days when a man in a gabardine mac and a trilby kept watch while his colleague unscrewed the telephone to install a bug and hide a microphone in the plant pot have long gone. Those involved in terrorism, or in serious and organised crimes like drug and people trafficking, international fraud, hard core pornography, paedophilia and child sexual abuse, do so today with a sophistication and technical knowledge that many of us would struggle to comprehend.

Those who are victims of such crimes experience horrors that we can only imagine. We have a duty therefore to tackle such crime, but that can never mean

that there are no boundaries as to how we do so. Citizens are entitled to seek security, safety and privacy, and there is a responsible balance to be met. Any legislation must be proportionate, necessary and effective, and its use limited to its necessity. There must be adequate and effective checks and balances to prevent abuse or misuse, but where that occurs there must be severe penalties for those who do so.

This is my first speech in this House as Leader of the Opposition. Therefore, finally, perhaps I may add a couple of thank-yous as well as an indication of how I intend to lead from these Benches. I very gratefully thank the members of the Labour group who have shown great faith in electing me, especially those many friends and colleagues who nominated me. But there is one individual to whom I and my colleagues in this House owe a debt of gratitude: my noble friend Lady Royall, or "Jan" as she is known to us all, from whom I have learnt much in my five years in this House. I know that it is a cliché, but those who heard her response to the Queen's Speech last week will have seen that she really does leave a big pair of shoes to fill. I can only hope that I will go some way to doing that. There are similarities between us, and not just the ginger hair. As some noble Lords may have spotted, Basildon is an anagram of Blaisdon.

I have asserted that Labour will abide by the broad principles of the Salisbury convention, but I believe that the Government, and indeed the Prime Minister, have some way to go to learn how to work with this House and with Peers of all parties and none. If Mr Cameron and his Ministers choose not to, and instead seek to railroad through legislation not specified in the Conservative manifesto, we will be robust in our challenges and ready to take them to the wire in the interests of good government and good legislation.

3.51 pm

**Lord Paddick (LD):** My Lords, before I start my speech today, I want to say a few words about Charles Kennedy. Many on these Benches knew Charles very well and his loss is being felt acutely by Liberal Democrats across the country. Our thoughts are with his family at this time. As many others have said, Charles was an extraordinary communicator. His passion for social justice and Liberal Democrat values inspired not only those on these Benches but people of all parties and of none, not least because of his principled stand against the Iraq war.

For him to die so young is a loss not just to the Liberal Democrats but to political life across the board. He will be sadly missed. I am told by colleagues who were here at the time that during the late night ping-pong on control orders during the passage of the Prevention of Terrorism Bill, Charles appeared at 5 am to tell weary Lib Dem Peers to keep up the good fight on what was one of the biggest battles on the protection of civil liberties of the new Labour years. Remembering his commitment to protecting rights and civil liberties is perhaps the most fitting tribute as we discuss these issues today.

I intend to concentrate on some of the home affairs issues outlined in the Queen's Speech. My colleagues will cover other aspects. One of the first Bills that this House will be asked to consider is the Psychoactive

Substances Bill, which will outlaw not just specific so-called legal highs but anything and everything that has a mind-altering effect unless it is specifically listed as being exempt or is covered by other legislation such as the Misuse of Drugs Act.

I believe that an authoritarian approach, where blanket laws prohibit everything unless the Government allow it, sets a potentially dangerous precedent. The Bill is well meaning, with the current practice of selling so-called legal highs on the high street, one molecule different from a banned substance, in packets marked “not fit for human consumption”, is a nonsense. But we must ask ourselves, what is the purpose of this Bill? If the purpose, as it surely should be, is to prevent harm, the misuse of drugs should be treated as a health issue and not a criminal one.

We have seen from our experience with those drugs already classified as illegal that making dealing in those substances a criminal offence simply pushes the trade underground into the hands of criminals where there is even less control over quality, active ingredients and who can purchase them, all of which significantly increases the potential for harm. There should at least be consistency and some basis in science. If the Government are to exempt mind-altering substances on the basis of relative harm, as they intend to do with alcohol and tobacco, should they not also look at exempting substances currently covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act, and at synthetic mind-altering substances that are clinically proven to be less harmful than alcohol and tobacco? Surely licensing, regulation, education and treatment are the positive ways forward, rather than criminalising even more of our young people. This Bill would simply add to the confusion surrounding the attempts to protect people from the harm caused by misusing drugs and push pleasure-seekers into the hands of criminals.

We will also be presented with a new investigatory powers Bill. We only recently reconsidered the draft communications data Bill when another attempt was made to introduce it as an amendment to a counterterrorism Bill before this House. We had a long and informed debate on the issues and we decided that we were content with the reviews that are currently under way by the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation and others. I argued then, and I will continue to argue, that the powers the Government seek to convey on the police and the security services would seriously impinge on individual rights to privacy while failing to deliver what the police and the security services actually need.

In short, terrorists are using internet-based encrypted methods of communication that cannot be deciphered without the support and co-operation of those providing the services, most of whom are based beyond British jurisdiction. Currently, international co-operation and agreement enable the police and the security services to present their evidence to overseas service providers, who, if convinced by that evidence, voluntarily give up the information. International co-operation and agreement are the way forward, not giving the police and security services blanket access to our private data. At the same time as the Government seek to erode personal privacy with their new investigatory powers Bill, they

could also diminish citizens' ability to take action against the agencies of the state for infringing such rights were the Human Rights Act to be repealed.

There has been much discussion and coverage of the European Union Referendum Bill. To date, the focus has almost exclusively been on the negative impact on the economy, not only of leaving the EU but of the damage caused by the uncertainty over a referendum that could result in the UK's exit. What need to be brought to the fore—as the right honourable Kenneth Clarke MP did at the weekend in an interview on the BBC's “Sunday Politics”—are the significant European-wide crime fighting initiatives that are currently in place, ranging from serious and organised cybercrime to the abuse of children and human trafficking, all of which could also be placed in jeopardy by our leaving the European Union.

We then have the extremism Bill, the need for which was trailed by the Prime Minister during the election campaign, when he said:

“For too long, we have been a passively tolerant society, saying to our citizens: as long as you obey the law, we will leave you alone”.

As far as policing is concerned, if the Government intend to inflict further cuts on the police service, we will have seriously to reconsider the whole basis on which British policing is based: policing by consent. I hope that the Government do not sleepwalk into undermining that principle.

Overall, the Government have all the hallmarks of an authoritarian, anti-libertarian, inward-looking Administration who would rather peddle crowd-pleasing, superficial, nationalistic policies than seek genuine solutions to the real problems facing this country and its people. I hope to be proved wrong. I am justifiably proud of what the Liberal Democrats achieved in the last coalition Government and I intend to be equally proud of what the Liberal Democrats will do now that we are freed from the shackles of coalition. In an election poster, the Liberal Democrats were portrayed as an iron fist in a velvet glove. My Lords, the gloves are off.

3.59 pm

**The Earl of Lytton (CB):** My Lords, I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate and thank the noble Baroness, Lady Williams, for introducing it. I look forward to the two maiden speeches and the valedictory speech of the noble Lord, Lord Eden of Winton.

No contribution from a practising chartered surveyor would be complete without a comment on housing and development, and I declare my interests. If, as we are told, there is a significant deficit in housing completions, there are one or two things to bear in mind. First, there is a shortage of skills in both the construction worker and backroom technician sectors which cannot be remedied overnight. Then, if one is going to build a lot of housing in growth areas, some greenfield land will need to be used. However, many local planning authorities perceive that their electorates will not support that. Terms such as “sustainability” and “localism” are used as weapons, just as “environment” used to be in times past.

[THE EARL OF LYTTON]

Rapid increases in house prices are fuelled by a relative shortage but many would profit from these rapid rises, including existing owners, mortgage lenders and foreign investors to mention but three. The marginal cost of taxation, regulatory compliance, the community infrastructure levy, affordable housing, community benefits and so on in a quite risky financial model of development economics can have a material effect on the cost base. This needs to be monitored constantly. I well remember the late 1970s when the development land tax caused the effective failure of the land supply.

When we build, we need decent standards. I still see serious shortcomings in the quality control under some of the self-assessing construction warranty schemes where normal local authority building control supervision is perfectly legally bypassed. We are also building properties that are too complex for normal occupiers to use effectively. They are too cramped in living space and have too little communal amenity space. This is cheapening the product for first-time buyers. Talking of cheap, I observe that if one offers affordable housing and the option to purchase at a discount later on, a long queue will form and demand is not necessarily the same as need. Staying on that, I hope that the proceeds of any housing association right to buy will indeed be reinvested in the sector and not appropriated for other things as the council house proceeds were in 2000.

We have a common desire for a fairer, more just society and my second theme relates to this. In the Queen's Speech debate last year, I drew attention to the shortcomings of the police—an institution that should be one of our most trusted, cherished and honourable public services. There still remains much to be done and I welcome the commitment in the gracious Speech and the remarks of the noble Baroness, Lady Williams, in that respect. However, if the police lack accountability, so do some other sectors. I am constantly told that local authorities—I declare an interest as a vice-president of the LGA—are among the greatest snoopers and eavesdroppers into the affairs of the citizen. What are we doing about that?

Our institutions are in many ways no better than the standards of society at large, where individual gain and lack of responsibility seem to have supplanted collective care and conscience. My father used to quote Aristotle. For example, "that which is owned in common belongs to nobody" was one of his favourite quotes. In relation to some legal advice he once received, he quoted Aristotle's words, "where there is muddle and confusion, dishonesty stalks close behind". How true. Throw away the rulebook and anything becomes possible. In complex situations moral depravity may even become undetectable.

My recent experiences in the planning field as a professional have been unedifying. Obtaining listed building consent to replace a gutter on a client's building included 10 months of official delay, muddle and incompetence. I will stop short of naming the authority in question. HMRC itself appears to be a player and gamer of the system, to the point where it is impossible to know whether one is dealing with the objective administrator of a tax code or an aggressive commercial undertaking that is like some of the utility companies. That should stop.

Then we have areas of what seem to me to be complete lawlessness. I refer to situations where the elderly and vulnerable are fleeced of their assets, of their financial freedom and dignity, with apparent impunity. I have had recent direct experience of this, where the normal safeguards appear to have been dispensed with and family beneficiaries have been largely cut out of a will that favoured some friendly neighbour. On further inquiry, it became clear that this is a growing phenomenon, perpetrated by a range of people, from avaricious kinfolk to opportunistic neighbours and unrelated conmen. If adverse influence does not work, it is frighteningly easy to forge a signature, impersonate an old person, make a bogus will or obtain by deception a power of attorney, which one can do online via a government website. What is it about, "Thou shalt not steal or bear false witness or covet" that is misunderstood in modern society? The fact is, there is a better defence against money laundering than there is against abuse of the elderly or the young, and the problem, as I see it, is growing. Because of privacy and other repercussions, nobody dares mention their suspicions so we have a society in which these things are everyone's concern but apparently none of one's individual business.

Perhaps this problem is just a matter of little public interest that can readily be dealt with by those affected through civil action—I wish. The courts are clogged to the point of dysfunction, with delays, huge costs and some mismanagement. The very pillar of the 1940s reforms to the welfare state, which included fair access to justice, has crumbled. There is no such access now. There is clear injustice where there is inadequate access to these things. All these things have consequences for public confidence and trust, ultimately, in the rule of law. In a fair society, these issues and others like them need to be addressed, not by wholesale new regulation so much as by streamlining what we already have. That is the message I wish to give to the House today.

4.07 pm

**Lord Blencathra (Con):** My Lords, I will try to deliver my speech from this position. I am testing a new medication and I want to push it—and myself—to the limit. I pray for your Lordships' understanding if I have to finish my seven minutes from a sedentary position.

Perhaps I might also add to the tribute paid by the noble Lord, Lord Paddick, to Charles Kennedy and be the first Conservative in this House to do so. The Prime Minister was right: he was taken from us far too young. In terms of returning a record number of MPs, he was the most successful leader the Liberal Democrats have ever had. I also pay tribute to the fact that he, more than anyone else, laid to rest the myth of the dour Highland Scot. There was nothing dour about Charles Kennedy. Having served with him in the other place, I know we shall all miss him.

I welcome most of the Bills announced in the gracious Speech—if I understand them correctly. In particular, I welcome the investigatory powers Bill if it is a rewrite of RIPA, which is now discredited and not fit for purpose. We need a new RIPA that incorporates the conclusions of the Joint Select Committee I was

privileged to chair and the recommendations of David Anderson QC. However, I am concerned that in the big media briefing pack issued by No. 10 last Wednesday, the report by the Intelligence and Security Committee, which naturally was very supportive of everything the security services wanted, was included as a key background paper—but not my Select Committee report. I am not precious about it but I hope that that does not indicate any backsliding by the Home Office on its excellent redraft of the original, discredited snoopers' charter.

I remind my noble friend the Minister that our committee had Members from both Houses and all parties and none. We had widely differing views, which we probably still have, but we ended up with a unanimous report. We achieved that because we agreed that we could not have some general, wide-ranging, inexplicable and obscure powers for the security services, which would make it impossible for us in Parliament sensibly to amend and vote on each power requested. That original obscure draft caused the widespread revolt against the Bill, so we concluded that if the key contentious elements, such as the collection of weblogs and third-party data, and new definitions of subscriber and communications data, were set out individually and clearly that would permit Members in both Houses to vote on these powers. They would have the stamp of informed parliamentary authority. Of course, the Government may be afraid that they would lose one of these powers but I honestly believe that if we come clean on exactly what the police and security services want, Parliament will narrowly agree.

What would be utterly unacceptable, I say to my noble friend, would be to pass some obscure powers and then have the Security Service pop up in a year's time and say, "Aha, we have the power to do this, that and the other. Didn't you realise it when you passed that vague clause?". We have recently seen how the Americans have suddenly woken up to the fact that they have been lied to by the NSA. As the *Times* says today:

"Intelligence services should not be given a free pass, here or in the United States ... The intelligence and security services ... need to become much more open about their role and intentions. If they do, the public will be reassured".

I think we would be reassured also. I hope therefore that the Bill will take up our other suggestion for a mechanism for rapid amendment as technology changes and create a standing committee to advise on that.

I turn now to the extremism Bill, and I choose my words very carefully. I support this measure, provided that it specifically targets the real problem of extremism and not all radicals. I consider myself a bit of a radical in some ways, and so do many noble Lords, so radicalism per se is not the problem. Instead the words "radicalisation" and "extremism" are euphemisms for the words we dare not mention: namely, political Islamism—the ideology—or Islamofascism. I do not often agree with Tony Blair, but I agree with what he said in April 2014. He said:

"At the root of the crisis lies a radicalised and politicised view of Islam, an ideology that distorts and warps Islam's true message. The threat of this radical Islam is not abating. It is growing. It is spreading across the world. It is de-stabilising communities and even nations. It is undermining the possibility of peaceful co-existence in an era of globalisation. And in the face of this threat we seem curiously reluctant to acknowledge it and powerless to counter it effectively".

In March, the Home Secretary announced a completely new strategy. She said:

"This strategy aims to tackle the whole spectrum of extremism, violent and non-violent, ideological and non-ideological, Islamist and neo-Nazi—hate and fear in all their forms".

My fear about the Bill, therefore, is that the Home Office will want to appear to be even-handed, catching all extremists, and not target the real problem of politicised Islamism, the ideology. But where do the problems really lie? Do we have Buddhist suicide bombers? Are there Free Presbyterians beheading Roman Catholics in Benbecula? Are there jihadi Jehovah's Witnesses? Of course not, so who then deserves to be caught in this wide net of extremists?

The other vile ideologies that I can think of are the BNP, neo-Nazis, UK Uncut, various other anarchists, all permutations of the Communist Party of Great Britain and the Socialist Workers Party. They would all like to bring down our liberal western democracy but, while we abhor their views and despise their expression of them, are they really a serious problem? As far as I can see from their websites, their active members have not got the guts or the guile, the wit or the wisdom—or a united religious fervour—to organise anything that threatens our liberal democracy. They have no coherent philosophy, except that they seem to hate each other even more than the country they despise. What really threatens our democratic way of life is a desire by political Islamists to impose a theocracy that would replace all the democratic rule of law that we have developed over 500 years in this country. It would impose the same brutality that Christianity imposed when it operated on Old Testament teachings of "an eye for an eye", rather than loving one's neighbour as oneself.

The Home Secretary went on to say that,

"the foundation stone of our new strategy is the proud promotion of British values. These values—such as regard for the rule of law, participation in and acceptance of democracy, equality, free speech and respect for minorities—are supported by the overwhelming majority of British people".

So my worry is that a generalist, catch-all definition of extremism will result in some idiot police forces arresting a couple of ladies from the WI and a traditionalist Church of England vicar who has said something radical—for example, that he actually believes in God. I justify the term "idiot police force" by reminding noble Lords that after the appalling *Charlie Hebdo* massacre in Paris, Wiltshire police sprang into action and demanded to know the names of local people in the village of Corsham who had bought the commemorative edition.

We have seen how police forces up and down the country, unfortunately, have ignored reports of thousands of children being raped and raped again because they did not want to offend a section of society. We cannot trust them to use properly any wide, generalist powers we may have in this Bill, and we need to spell out exactly what and who we want them to target.

I believe that, as legislators, we have a duty not just to spell out clearly the philosophy of British values but to give clear and unequivocal guidance to those who will have to enforce our intentions. We cannot afford to get this wrong, not only because we will miss the real extremists we need to catch but because we will then prejudice the British public against our efforts if

[LORD BLENCATHRA]

our police forces persist in failing to take appropriate action against them. I look forward to seeing the text of the Bill in due course.

4.16 pm

**Lord Layard (Lab):** The Government said in the gracious Speech that they will seek effective global co-operation to combat climate change, including at the Paris negotiations in December. That is very welcome, and of course Britain has a great reputation as a world leader on climate change. But suppose this Government, or any other, commit themselves to a target for the reduction of greenhouse gases; how can they be sure of delivering the target? By far the surest way to reduce carbon dioxide emissions is for clean energy to become less costly to produce than dirty energy. That is the central proposition: clean energy must be cheaper to produce than dirty energy. It is a purely technological problem; in fact, it is the biggest single technological problem facing humanity today.

On current forecasts, the world's rise in temperature will exceed 2 degrees centigrade within the next 30 years. Once that happens, it will eventually lead to a 6-metre rise in sea level. It is that scary story that has made world leaders commit to stopping the rise in temperature before it hits 2 degrees centigrade. But of course that can be achieved only by an unprecedented rate of technical progress in reducing the cost of clean energy. At present, we are mainly relying on the private sector to deliver that. However, given the urgency of the situation, we have to say that the progress being made is simply not fast enough. The forecasts are terrifying.

In the past when nations have been faced with existential crises, they have called on the scientific community to engage in major, focused, publicly funded programmes of research and development. Good examples are the Manhattan Project and the Apollo moonshot programme. That is what we need today—that kind of focused, publicly led research and development effort to tackle climate change. That is why seven authors, six of whom are Members of this House, have come together in recent months to propose a so-called global Apollo programme to tackle climate change. The Government are taking that on board, in a way that I will describe in a moment, but let me first describe the proposal.

The proposal is not dissimilar from the moonshot and has three components. First, there is a 10-year target: within 10 years we must have base-load electricity from renewables that is cheaper than it is from coals. Secondly, there is the scale: all nations are being invited to join, but any Government who join must commit to spending, each year, 0.02% of GDP within the framework of the programme. Our country is in fact spending about that amount at the moment, which is £350 million per year. Thirdly, there is the framework within which the money is to be spent.

This is being based on what has happened, in a way that many people do not realise, in the semiconductor industry over the past three decades. It is not a mystery that the price has come plummeting: it is the result of a concerted effort. The Semiconductor Technology Roadmap Committee makes an international technology road map for semiconductors each year that identifies

the blockages to reducing the price, and it commissions research to unblock those obstacles. The majority of the money has come from the public sector, but the whole effort is a public/private partnership in which allocation is done jointly by government and businesses. It has been enormously effective and is obviously the only way in which we can have a chance of averting the disaster that faces us. The main areas for research are renewable energy generation and, even more importantly, the storage of it for the times when it is needed, the market and the methods of distribution.

The Government have adopted this proposal, I am happy to say, except for the scale of the expenditure, on which they are at present reserving their position until the comprehensive spending review. With that reservation, they are putting the proposal to the G7 leaders meeting in Bavaria this weekend. Of course, it is vital that they commit themselves to that expenditure as soon as possible, and it is really important that that happens before the October date of the comprehensive spending review, or whenever it is. Unless we have a government commitment on this issue, we cannot provide the leadership that would turn this into a major British initiative of real world historical importance.

I quote Sir David Attenborough, who argues that this is at last,

“an authoritative, practical and comprehensible plan that could avert the catastrophe that is threatening our planet”.

I earnestly hope that the Government can give it the highest priority and act on it within the next few weeks to give it their complete backing.

4.22 pm

**Baroness Hamwee (LD):** My Lords, I, too, congratulate both Ministers on their promotions. As a colleague said, the noble Lord is no ordinary Conservative—therefore, my congratulations are rather warmer. I also congratulate the noble Baroness. It was no surprise at all to me that she was elected unopposed

The last debate in the last Parliament was on indefinite immigration detention, a topic which certainly deserves further attention—but there are so many topics and so little time today. Humane treatment is intrinsically right and important, and so are human rights. The Conservatives should be proud of their predecessors' post-war achievements. Yesterday, I came into the Chamber as the noble and learned Lord, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, said this, putting it much better than I can. Whether we are talking about the convention or the court, I react against the idea of a British Bill of Rights, because that suggests that anything that is not British is inferior. Rights are rights, including rights for people whom we might not like very much. They are not something earned, and the term “deserve” has no place in our politics.

Reference is also made to “spurious” human rights and “bogus” asylum seekers—a similar kind of approach. Neither term is appropriate, unless and until, through proper process, they have been found to be so. Careless language can too easily validate xenophobia—and so, I fear, may some of the policies on immigration, but let us give them the benefit of the doubt and see what the detail is. Illegal working is already illegal, and seizing wages is unlikely to do more than to drive people further underground. As for cracking down on landlords,



why should there not be a focus on the conditions endured by exploited occupants? Given the targets or ambitions for immigration numbers, it is ironic that the Conservatives talk up the problems of immigration. It must confirm a belief, which an awful lot of people hold, that the proportion of immigrants in our population is much higher than it actually is.

I accept that perceptions are important, and I accept the need to address the detail of people's concerns; so, for instance, a requirement that recruitment agencies must recruit within the UK as well as abroad is sensible. I have a particular question about the labour market enforcement agency. I wonder whether the Minister can make clear how it fits into the review of the Gangmasters Licensing Authority. Are there different remits, or what? It is natural, too, to resent immigrants pitching up and immediately claiming benefits, although I know that they do so much less than the indigenous community.

Our policy must not raise expectations about reforms that cannot be met. The Conservative manifesto refers to a visa system which puts British people first:

"Across the spectrum, from the student route to the family and work routes".

There are different views on how to achieve that. As one example, I believe—as I have said before, and will go on saying—that the family visa rules that do not support British citizens married to non-Britons with British children do not achieve this. Fluent English, which is also mentioned, is indeed a means to integration—I put it that way; not that a lack of it is a bar. But that raises questions about the availability and accessibility of the teaching of English.

We talked about integration and community cohesion a good deal during the passage of the Counter-terrorism and Security Act. I am sad that the nuanced, lower-key, persuasive approach to the counternarrative to terrorism does not seem to find a place in what we know so far about the extremism Bill. As has already been said by more than one noble Lord, during the passage of that Act we debated what the definition of extremism might be, but without reaching a conclusion. On banning orders and the proscription of organisations which fall short of existing thresholds, we need to take extreme care not to infringe that British value—freedom of speech. The counterextremism strategy is expected shortly. Can the Minister tell us what consultation is taking place, or will take place, on the construction of that strategy?

I hope we will be able to continue to address issues that we addressed in the previous Parliament, particularly on modern slavery, overseas domestic workers, supply chains and creating a tort of exploitation to allow for civil claims, which was dealt with in an amendment from the noble Baroness, Lady Young of Hornsey. We might also consider whether some of the young people who are going to conflict areas are, in a sense, trafficked. All this is very complex and needs a lot of sensitivity.

I shall say one word for now, and say more next week, on new psychoactive substances. If dealing with them is as easy as imposing a blanket ban, why did we go through so many hoops in the last Parliament?

All this requires resources, so a law to preclude raising income tax was one of the things that caused me to shout at my radio during April. My radio came

in for a lot of abuse in April. I also abused it—and this is relevant to community cohesion—when I heard the policy on the right to buy social housing. It will be funded, and new properties provided, through the sale of all those high-value properties whose value local authorities, flush with cash, have failed to recognise and realise over the past few years. I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Kerslake, on the coverage of his comments yesterday on this issue.

I did a word search in the Conservative manifesto and the word "passionately" is used only once, and that was in respect of a belief in home ownership. Of course I recognise the convention about the manifesto on which the Government were elected, and indeed that the Government are no longer "encumbered"—the Home Secretary's term—by the coalition. Time will tell whether in addressing the detail of legislation, where the devil may reside, this House will be concerned with its workability or something more subversive.

4.30 pm

**The Lord Bishop of Salisbury (Maiden Speech):** My Lords, I thank your Lordships for the opportunity to participate in this debate, for the warmth of your welcome and for the practical help and support given to me, as to every new Member, by the excellent officers and staff of this House.

A number of noble Lords know that, before becoming Bishop of Salisbury in 2011, I was for 16 years the vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields in Trafalgar Square, where, as a near neighbour to Parliament, I formed a mostly good view of it. For example, Mr Robert Andrews was a homeless man who for 35 years spent the morning in St Martin's and the afternoon in the Central Lobby of Parliament hoping to petition Her Majesty the Queen about a matter of defence and national importance. He died on Christmas Day in 1997 in Piccadilly, having had lunch in the day centre at St Martin's. Those present at his funeral, including about 70 from both Houses, with staff and officers, pieced his fractured life together by placing a flower in a vase and saying one thing that they knew about him. I was impressed by how much people in Parliament cared for an isolated mentally ill person in ways that crossed social and political boundaries.

Every parish priest and bishop knows what it is to care for the whole community. It is a great aim for the Government, as set out at the start of Her Majesty's gracious Speech, to,

"legislate in the interests of everyone in our country",

and,

"adopt a one-nation approach".

The success of that will be one of the measures by which the Government are judged.

The role of the Lords spiritual is distinctive and, we hope, helpful to the workings of this House. We are non-partisan in a political process. Our underlying concern is with the integration of beliefs and values that guide what we do, make our spirituality and animate us as human beings. We take the long view when the pressures are often to the short term.

Our society is not confident in handling matters of religion and belief, yet we live in a world in which 80% of people identify themselves as part of a religious

[THE LORD BISHOP OF SALISBURY]  
group, 2.2 billion of them Christians. The church is local everywhere. Last week, I was part of a small delegation with Christian Aid to Malawi. There, the poorest experience the harsh effects of climate change, and were investing time and effort in a response to deforestation, soil erosion, drought and flooding. For more than 40 years, the diocese of Salisbury has had strong links with the Anglican Church in South Sudan and Sudan. They teach us what it is to live as neighbours in a fragile world.

In facing the big issues, the church has deep roots and can contribute particularly on matters to do with character, values and identity, which will be so vital in the debates about our national identity and what it is to be British, European and global citizens.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is that fire-like energy and life-giving breath or wind that animates people. In the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit gave communication to people of different languages, by which we find our place with one another under God—the very opposite of Babel. In John's Gospel the spirit is also called the Paraclete, translated as “intercessor” and “advocate”. Every priest and bishop will want to be intercessor and advocate, especially for the poor, whose voice is not easily heard. The spirit is also the “comforter”—literally, that which strengthens us. Your Lordships might remember that in the Bayeux tapestry Bishop Odo is depicted comforting his men, strengthening his men, by pushing them with a spear from behind.

For the Church of England, I chair the Committee for Ministry of and Among Deaf and Disabled People, and I am the lead bishop on the environment. The need for welfare reform is widely accepted, but the spiritual as well as the practical test is whether the reforms comfort and strengthen people. Welfare is not always giving people a hand up; sometimes we have a duty of care. That is particularly true for those who are disabled. Do the reforms strengthen people? A touchstone for legislation would be the golden rule in all the world's religions that we should do to others as we would have them do to us.

In response to the economic difficulties of the 1980s, my predecessor as vicar of St Martin's, Canon Geoffrey Brown, who died last Thursday, established a business. He engaged the church with the world of work. It created employment at a time of unemployment and saw profit as something that can be good, both in the way it is produced and in the way it is used and distributed for the good of all. Geoffrey Brown's vision continues to bear much fruit in that open and inclusive church: the spirit of good business is good for all.

Your Lordships may have seen the four original copies of Magna Carta when they were displayed in this House earlier this year as part of the 800th anniversary. Everyone agreed that Salisbury Cathedral's is by far the best. Power has to be held to account by the rule of law—that is the main point of Magna Carta. However, there is also a compelling link between Magna Carta and the modern tradition of human rights—an important theme in our world and of this Parliament.

The economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the environment. The Government emphasise the virtue of paying off our financial debts for the sake of future

generations. They must also remember that we are running at an ecological deficit that cannot be sustained. The issues connected with climate change are the greatest moral issues of our day. Like some others, I wonder about the potential of a green Magna Carta.

The journey through Paris and the UN climate change summit at the end of the year must further our commitment toward fair, ambitious, accountable and binding climate change agreements, nationally and internationally. By 2020, Scotland will be producing the equivalent of 100% renewable energy. Renewable energy, not just oil and fossil fuels, will be a key part of debates about the future of the United Kingdom. This will be a challenge to us English, whose need for energy will not be met without the determined commitment on the part of government, not just local communities, to renewable sources of energy, including wind.

Like bad King John, Bishop Odo did not leave a good reputation. Nevertheless, I look forward to comforting and strengthening the Government, like Bishop Odo comforting his troops, not with a spear but with a shepherd's crook.

4.38 pm

**Baroness Meacher (CB):** My Lords, I applaud the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Salisbury on his excellent maiden speech. It is an honour to be able to welcome him to your Lordships' House and on behalf of noble Lords to recognise his wide range of interests and areas of expertise: not only the environment but also the needs of disabled people, including deaf people—which he mentioned in his maiden speech—music, and areas of particular interest to me, namely ethics, psychotherapy and counselling. Many of us will be seeking his support in the months ahead.

On the subject of my contribution today, I welcome the opportunity presented by the Psychoactive Substances Bill to have a detailed debate over the coming weeks about how best to reduce the importation and use of high-risk psychoactive substances. To many, this seems a narrow, rather insignificant issue, but it touches on one of the four major global issues of the 21st century. These are terrorism and security; climate change; the destruction of our seas through pollution; and last but not least, international crime, including very substantial levels of drug-related crime and associated violence and corruption.

The UK has one of the toughest drug policies, yet one of the highest levels of high-risk drug use of any western European country. My perspective on the proposed Bill is informed by the inquiry into new psychoactive substances that we undertook for the all-party parliamentary group for drug policy reform. We considered evidence from more than 30 organisations, including ACPO, the ACMD and other government bodies, professional associations and very senior medical and scientific experts. The evidence showed that to reduce the use of NPS, any policy must take account of the interaction between the markets for traditional and new drugs. I have to say that I am not convinced that the proposed law yet does that.

One aspect of the Bill I strongly applaud is the apparent aim to limit the proposed ban to the import or supply of NPS, while avoiding criminalising the

users of these drugs if they are not also an importer. Drug policies that avoid criminalising young people have tangible benefits to individuals, families and communities, and do not lead to increased levels of addiction. The challenge of responding to the growing use of psychoactive substances offers an opportunity for Government to develop policy on the basis of scientific evidence about effective strategies for the first time for 50 years.

Last year, this House debated the European Commission's regulation on new psychoactive substances. The Government persuaded Parliament to opt out of that regulation because of a strong belief in subsidiarity. I happen to agree that subsidiarity should be the default position, but drugs is one of four key areas where we really do need policy that reaches across national borders. I therefore hope that the proposed Bill can be brought as far as possible into line with the regulation.

What would that mean in practice? The regulation which has been approved by the European Parliament but not yet by the Council, introduces a policy of action proportionate to the level of social, health and safety risks of the drug. That is absolutely critical if the provision is to be taken seriously. Substances that pose severe risks will be submitted to permanent market restriction. The Commission document recognises the harms these substances can cause to the health and safety of individuals; we know they can cause death, injury and disease.

The risk of the proposed ban on "head shop" sales of psychoactive substances is that young people will turn to back-street dealers or the internet, both of which are even less responsible than "head shops". It has been suggested to me that the Bill could therefore increase the risks to young people, unless we can mitigate those risks.

A blanket ban on new psychoactive substances could prove a serious impediment to UK university-based research into the physiological properties of such substances. Such research is needed before clinical trials can take place. We need to address this issue when we consider the Bill.

Psychoactive substances have other, legitimate uses. The Commission's regulation specifically takes account of the fact that individual national measures such as those proposed by the Government disrupt trade in legitimate uses of these substances. We will have to look at that issue. Adjusting the Bill to bring it more into line with the regulation would ensure the free movement of psychoactive substances for commercial, industrial, scientific and medical purposes, while providing a graduated and proportionate set of restriction measures for substances posing risks. I wholeheartedly support such controls.

The key point is that a blanket ban will not achieve the Government's objective. It will not bring about the reduction in the overall use of dangerous drugs that we all want to see. The government agencies that gave evidence to our inquiry made it clear that it is not possible to intercept more than a tiny fraction of the legal highs coming through in packages from China and India to people's homes. The best hope is that if government policy were logical and sensible, young

people might take it seriously. If reasonably harmless psychoactive substances were legal and the more risky ones—one might call them the more dangerous ones—were banned, young people would take note. They do not want to harm themselves but they do not know what they are doing, and I do not think that this Bill necessarily helps.

I look forward to working with the Minister, as I have done before, in a constructive way to generate a Bill which will create a safer world for our young people.

4.45 pm

**Baroness Hollis of Heigham (Lab):** My Lords, I congratulate the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Salisbury on a wonderful speech and I look forward immensely to the maiden speech of the noble Lord, Lord Kerslake. I declare an interest as chair of Broadland Housing Association.

I fought Great Yarmouth in the 1970s. Then, every large village and small town in its large rural hinterland had a dozen council homes, sustaining the village school, shops and local services. They are virtually all gone, sold into the private rented sector or as second homes. Most have not been replaced. Without my housing association, many local people would have nothing to rent at all. This matters because, although we have three types of housing tenure in this country, we have one housing market and one housing crisis. With owner-occupation, between 1997 and 2012 wages went up by 55% but house prices by 200%, so people have lingered longer in the private rented sector, which has become mostly a parasitic tenure of buy to let, not build to let, and the stock that we need has not been added. If anyone needs right to buy, it is private tenants.

As for social housing, 2.5 million homes were sold under right to buy and only one in 10 has been replaced, so waiting lists approach 5 million. Therefore, we have across all sectors a crisis of scarcity.

Housing associations have taken the strain. Mostly they are charities, some with roots going back to 19th-century philanthropy, and they are framed by charity legislation going back to the days of Elizabeth I. Half of housing association property was built by traditional housing associations such as mine, sometimes on land from bequests by local benefactors. The other half of housing association property was transferred from local authorities, becoming what we call stock transfer housing associations.

Housing associations were originally favoured by Tory Governments over council housing precisely because as private bodies they were, according to the then Minister, William Waldegrave, in 1988, freed "from the inevitable constraints" of being within the public sector and public accounts. Yet in the last five years we have been battered. In Norfolk, our capital grant was cut from £40,000 a property to less than £16,000, which does not even pay for the land, so few can build. Our tenants struggle with arrears and evictions as they face layers of cuts to their housing benefit, their prospective disability benefits and their council tax support—the same people hit three, four or five times over. With a more fragile rent roll, the banks that fund

[BARONESS HOLLIS OF HEIGHAM]

us are queasy. It is going to get worse because the Government plan to seize our assets—the assets of independent charities.

The Queen's Speech proposes right to buy for housing association tenants who, after three years of perhaps £5,000 a year rent—£15,000 in all—qualify for a discount of £40,000 to £50,000, rising to 70% of the house value. I repeat: 70%. As housing associations cannot fund these discounts and remain solvent, they will instead be financed by the forced sale of the best council houses. The *Daily Telegraph* has denounced this as, "economically illiterate and morally wrong".

Councils, council tenants and the desperate on waiting lists will be asset-stripped to fund huge discounts for those who are already better off and better housed than they are, simply to change their tenure, adding not one extra home. On the contrary, two social homes to rent will be forcibly sold to fund the discount on the purchase of just one of them.

There are 220,000 tenants who could exercise their RTB, costing £11.6 billion in discounts. Maybe many more will buy, if middle-aged children use their pension freedoms to help their 80 year-old parents buy. They would enjoy a huge capital windfall on the death of their parents.

Let us stay with that £11.6 billion figure. Think of it. It is enough to fund three years of the Barnett formula. It is enough to increase defence spending by 6%. It is enough, indeed, to protect the vulnerable from £12 billion of welfare cuts. If local authorities really could realise and keep £11.6 billion from sales, would they—would we?—really want to spend it on unearned giveaways to the well-housed and their children? Would they instead want to build a million shared-ownership homes, helping five times as many families to buy? Or might they even want to help fund social care for the elderly, relieving huge pressures on the NHS? If localism means anything at all, councils should have that choice.

It gets worse. Within five years, those homes will start to be sold for quick gains, just like council houses before them. Less than a third—only 29%—of council houses sold under right to buy are still occupied by former tenants. The rest have been sold on, half into the PRS. Therefore, councils pay for tenants to live in their old housing stock at treble the former rent and hugely increased housing benefit bills.

Housing associations are charities, not public authorities. Their £60 billion mortgage debt is not on the public accounts any more than landlords' mortgages are. They are independent charities, many of which are a century old, financed often by gifts from local benefactors. Would we accept the Government asset-stripping Eton or Winchester to fund academies? Perhaps the NHS would like the endowments of medical charities to pay for the drugs bill. Or perhaps we would accept National Trust assets being used to restore this Palace of Westminster. Consult your lawyers—that is my advice.

The answer to the housing crisis in all tenures is simple: double our housing starts to meet our rising birth rates, smaller households and increased longevity. We all want as many who wish and can to buy. As council leader, I built for sale with attached mortgages.

But those earning £14,000 a year in a minimum-wage job also need decent, affordable homes. HAs must build, not be forced to sell two rented homes to finance one RTB discount.

I have 10 questions for the Minister—not for today, but I would be grateful for the fullest answers in writing as we consider further action. What is the legal basis of the Government's right to seize the assets of independent charities, given that they will have to unpick myriad overlapping laws that go back centuries?

As this turns HAs into public bodies, do the Government accept that we would have instantly added £60 billion-plus to the PSBR?

What estimates have the Government made of the additional HB costs that follow and will that have to be funded by still further welfare cuts beyond the £12 billion?

What costings have the Government done on the viability of funding HA discounts by forcing local authorities to sell off their best council house property? What do the Government assume about turnover? Only £5 billion may be raised in forced sales to meet that £11.6 billion cost, because the most attractive council houses do not become vacant.

What happens to those local authorities, half of which have no council houses to sell because they have stock-transferred them already into housing associations? Who then pays for the discounts? The Government have said that RTB will be funded by council house sales in their area. Is that a district, a county, a region, or will the wealthier London postcodes fund us all?

Will local authorities still owning council housing be subsidising those without any or, instead, will the stock-transfer housing associations have to sell off their own more valuable property, thus losing two of their homes to fund the discount on one of them?

We currently have two discount schemes, right to buy and right to acquire, with very different discounts. Will the Government scrap the right to acquire or run both schemes alongside each other, with identical tenants getting hugely different discounts?

Will there be a cost floor, so no housing association is required to sell below its cost of provision, a problem if an older tenant moves into a new property with accumulated discount rights?

Will compensation be paid on the open market value of the lost property? What about the landlord's stream of income underpinning their business plans? Who covers the time gap between a HA sale and council sales required to fund the discount?

Will there be protection for rural communities with, let us say, a population of under 3,000 and for areas of outstanding natural beauty, where every sale will soon become a second home? Answers, please, in writing.

Finally, a few verdicts: the CBI says that right to buy,

"doesn't solve the problem of ... the supply of affordable homes".

The IFS is withering, saying that the scheme is,

"a significant giveaway to ... tenants",

which,

"would worsen the UK's underlying public finance position".

As for the credit rating agencies, Moody's says that the measure could,

"potentially impair housing associations' balance sheets and future borrowing capacity".

Boris Johnson describes it as "the height of insanity". Finally, Peabody's chief executive says:

"Peabody's assets belong to us. They are not the government's to sell".

I hope that this Bill never makes it to the Lords. If it does, I hope that this House will take it apart.

4.56 pm

**Lord Eden of Winton (Con) (Valedictory Speech):**  
My Lords—

**Noble Lords:** Hear, hear!

**Lord Eden of Winton:** Thank you, my Lords. Towards the end of the last Session, under the terms of the House of Lords Reform Act 2014, I gave notice of my intention to retire on 11 June. I hesitated long before interrupting this debate with what is now called a valedictory since I know that it places rather unfortunate constraints on free movement in this House, but I felt that the precedent had already been set.

We have had four marvellous valedictories. The first was made as long ago as October 2014 by the noble Lord, Lord Grenfell. That was a truly memorable speech on his part and it set the pattern, form and tone for other such speeches to follow. He was well followed by three other speeches, from my noble friend Lord Jenkin of Roding, the noble and learned Lord, Lord Lloyd of Berwick, and the noble Viscount, Lord Tenby. Two other noble Lords whose retirement was announced only yesterday, the noble Baroness, Lady Warnock, and my noble and learned friend Lord Mayhew of Twysden, have retired without making valedictory speeches, but I hope that all those who have gone ahead will realise how very much they are missed from this House.

I cannot begin to match their record of service, but what I can say is that the real reason for my going is that I have spent about two-thirds of my life so far in and around the Palace of Westminster and I thought that it was about time that I tried my hand at doing something else while I could still count marbles. My decision to retire, therefore, has nothing to do with my age. True, if all goes according to plan, I shall be 90 in September. Well, there is nothing particularly magical about that; it is just another milestone. Let us consider for a moment those 90 year-old stars that still shine so brightly in our midst. Most brilliant of all—in fact, a veritable galaxy in his own right—is that great man, my noble friend Lord Carrington, whom I was so pleased to see in his place earlier today. None can match his extraordinary career and outstanding record of service to this House and the nation. It will be well known to noble Lords that my noble friend Lord Carrington, has been frequently called upon to give the memorial address at services at St Margaret's, Westminster, and elsewhere. After one such occasion I congratulated him but said, "What really troubles me is who we are going to choose to do it for you whenever that time comes". "Don't worry, old boy", he replied with a chuckle, "I've already written it".

The point of retirement is that it clearly paves the way for good people to come in one's place. I mention two who have already made their contributions as maiden speeches in the earlier stages of this response to the Queen's Speech debate—my noble friend Lady Helic and the noble Lord, Lord Lisvane. They made magnificent speeches and will clearly make valuable contributions to this House.

As noble Lords will know, anyone who enters the political arena and embarks upon a political career will need a modicum of good luck. I was fortunate at the outset in that I was selected to fight two by-elections within three months—one I lost, the other I won. As a result, in February 1954, when Sir Winston Churchill was still Prime Minister, I became the youngest Member, for a short time, in the House of Commons.

I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to my constituents, who were extraordinarily long suffering. They put up with me for a long time—29 years—and they were immensely supportive, encouraging and loyal. Bournemouth was extremely well served by a great local newspaper, the *Daily Echo*, which was most generous in its coverage of my activities and most skilful in its interpretation of my speeches. It is good that the old constituency is now well represented by the able and hard-working Conor Burns, a first-class MP, who was rightly given a resounding vote of confidence at the last general election.

Without doubt the high point of my time in the Commons—apart from the chairmanship of two Select Committees, which was valuable experience—was when I was asked by Ted Heath to be a member of his Government in two Ministries. They were not easy times, to put it mildly. Sir Edward Heath was a complex and challenging character but I greatly valued his friendship. At the end of my time in the Commons, Margaret Thatcher asked me to be her personal assistant in the 1983 general election. Unlike the caricature so frequently represented of her, she was a wonderful person to work for—inspiring, considerate, straightforward and sensitive. Having served both Edward Heath and Margaret Thatcher, I saw and came to understand both sides.

I turn briefly to the subject area of today's debate. I am encouraged by the wonderful maiden speech we have just heard from the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Salisbury to say a word about the world environment. However, as I introduced a debate on this subject in March this year, I shall content myself with only one sentence: I deplore the continued destruction of rainforests across the globe. Insufficient recognition is given to how serious the situation is. There is little comprehension of the fact that trees are absolutely vital to sustain life on earth.

I shall touch on one other issue in the gracious Speech. It states:

"Measures will also be brought forward to promote social cohesion and protect people by tackling extremism".

I hope that the Government will turn their spotlight on the harsh and hard-hearted treatment of so many Muslim women in this country. They are often dealt with severely, and the actions in doing so are justified according to the doctrine of sharia law. But it is UK law which should guide and control these matters and

[LORD EDEN OF WINTON]

dictate what is right in this country, not sharia law. The cause of these women has for some years been championed by the noble Baroness, Lady Cox, a most courageous campaigner. She has tabled Questions for Written Answer and yesterday she presented a Bill to the House which I hope will give the Government an opportunity to listen more closely to what she has been saying and to follow the actions that she has suggested.

Before I conclude, I must acknowledge how much is contributed to our life here by all those who serve us at every level over such a wide range of functions. By way of illustration, I will mention three individuals who are well known to many of your Lordships. In the Bishops' Bar, fun, laughter and merriment are rarely absent, and that is largely thanks to the magnificent Marva James and Angela Dell. In the Peers' Dining Room, there is the incomparable Mary Rose Cormack, who is a seemingly unstoppable whirlwind of energy and efficiency. I thank them, and in fact I thank all the officers and staff wherever they work and whoever they are, because they all matter to us here. I thank them for their constant cheerfulness and unfailing courtesy.

And now, as my noble friend Lord Tebbit might say, it is time for me to get on my bike. Since 1923, when my uncle was elected to the Commons, there has always been an Eden in Parliament. Before him, from the 17th century onwards, the family has produced generations of Members of Parliament, mostly for the county of Durham. The tradition of public service in the Armed Forces, in diplomacy, in the church, in politics and in social work is deeply embedded in our family genes. I am glad to say that our banner will still be borne aloft in the immensely capable hands of my noble kinsman Lord Henley.

My purpose for interrupting this debate was really just to thank all noble Lords wherever they sit in the House for so generously accepting me here throughout the 32 years that I have been around the place. From now on I shall be watching from the sidelines the continuing good work and careful scrutiny that noble Lords give to legislation and the excellent debates in which they take part. It therefore remains for me to say only this: good luck for the future whatever it may be, and goodbye.

**Noble Lords:** Hear, hear!

5.09 pm

**Lord Wakeham (Con):** My Lords, it is not for my noble friend to say thank you, it is for us to thank him for all the years of service that he has given to this House: roughly 60 years in all, about half in the House of Commons and half in the House of Lords. He mentioned a number of positions that he has held in that time. A glance at *Who's Who* will show that that was just a sample of the many jobs he has done in service to our country in Parliament over those years.

I have known the noble Lord for the bulk of those 60 years. I knew him long before I became a Member of Parliament, as a matter of fact. By coincidence, I was invited to speak at a dinner in his constituency in

Bournemouth in 1983. During that day, the end of the Parliament, which was to be the end of my noble friend's time in the Commons, was announced. Therefore, the dinner that I attended was on his last day as a Member of Parliament. I mention that because I discovered that evening how much his constituents appreciated all the service he had given them over 30 years. He has given great service to our nation, and he has done it with the charm, wit and friendship that I, and I am sure many others, have appreciated. It is our very great desire to pay this tribute to him for all his service, not only to Parliament but to the whole nation. I hope that he will watch our proceedings for many years to come.

I do not want to be nostalgic for more than a second or two, but I remember the 1992 general election when I was put in charge of Conservative Central Office during the election campaign. We were behind in the polls for pretty well the whole of the campaign. We did not know whether it was wise to do so or not but we stuck to our guns and we won that election with a majority of 21. One of the young men helping me at that time was a young fellow called David Cameron. I learned a great deal from him during the election campaign and I hope that he learned a little from me.

As soon as the election was over, I was shunted into your Lordships' House as the Leader. The first big debate I had to do anything about was the debate on the Queen's Speech. In those days, the Leader of the House always wound up the debate on the last day; that was the tradition. I went to Willie Whitelaw, who had been the Leader some time before, to ask his advice as to what I should say and do. He said, "It's all pretty straightforward. It doesn't matter very much what you say during the debate as long as you mention by name everybody who has taken part". I do not know whether you got away with that in those days, but he got away with it and I like to think that I got away with it as well. But I think that those days have gone.

More seriously, energy is right at the heart of our economic policy, and the purpose of my remarks is to ask the Government to look at the position that we seem to have got ourselves into. It is more than 25 years ago since I privatised the electricity industry. When we privatised it, our objective for the industry and for the millions of private customers was to create a successful and competitive industry. We converted one great state corporation into 16 or 17 independent distribution companies with five or six generating companies and into a market that others from within the United Kingdom and from abroad could and were encouraged to enter. It was a great success. Professor Littlechild, the first regulator, has estimated that privatisation produced net benefits over the first three years of some £23 billion. In the first 10 years, from 1994 to 2004, productivity in the industry doubled. Since then, all those benefits have been lost. Dieter Helm, the leading energy economist from Oxford University, says that it is quite hard to make a case as bad as what the industry is now. It is so bad that Helm said recently that even the old state Central Electricity Generating Board would actually be better than what we currently have. What we did 25 years ago seems in effect to have been completely destroyed.

What has gone wrong? I have to say that I am not sufficiently up to date in these things to be able to give all the answers. This is the first time that I have spoken on energy in the 25 years since I was a Secretary of State. There are a number of things that cause me concern. First, the vertical and horizontal consolidation of the industry into the six big energy companies massively reduced the opportunities for competition. If I had been the Secretary of State I would not easily have agreed to these changes, but I do not suppose that they are the whole reason. Secondly, the way in which the Government have intervened to support renewable energy has been a mistake and has killed off any attempt at a competitive market. It is simply not possible to have a competitive market if the Government subsidise near zero marginal cost of output.

My plea to the Government is therefore to review the whole system and make it more competitive and transparent than it is now. I agree with the noble Lord, Lord Layard, who is not in his place at the moment, that one of the things that is vital is more research into how we can produce renewable energy that can compete. I am not against renewable energy. Indeed, I was the Secretary of State who brought in the original support for renewable energy. When we set it up, the first test we made was: could this form of energy ever be profitable? If the view was that it could, then there was a case for a level of subsidy to bring that forward quicker. However, if it could never be profitable it was doubtful whether it was ever right to subsidise it. Any project can be made profitable if sufficient subsidy is given to it, but that is not the way forward.

The Secretary of State needs to look at these projects afresh. She could well do that now: the considerable fall in the price of oil and fossil fuels, together with the emergence of fracking, makes the economics of what may have seemed reasonable some years ago not at all acceptable today. It has been argued that the cost of the generating capacity to replace the old nuclear and coal stations with a combination of renewable generators and the necessary back-up of conventional generators is more than double what would be necessary if we did not have to deal with the intermittent output from renewables. This is a massive extra cost.

There is also the substantial extra cost to the grid of the transmissions to connect remote onshore wind farms and even more costly offshore capacity. That in itself has been estimated to cost an extra £6 billion a year, even allowing for the fuel saved. I am sure that the Government have to look at these things again. There are further problems, because renewables can increase output at virtually no marginal cost when the sun shines and the wind blows. This must make it very difficult for conventional generators to operate sensibly. All this has to be dealt with in the context of a very understandable controversy in a country where many power stations are in areas of outstanding natural beauty. Whatever view we take on the need for renewables—and I agree very much that more research needs to be done—it must be properly costed in a system that is competitive and transparent. That is the only way forward.

Lastly, I am delighted that, in any review of energy policy, proper consideration will be given to the role of nuclear power. I am sure that there should be a much

bigger role for nuclear power, which is potentially the best renewable project of all. I wish the new Secretary of State well in her responsibilities, but she has to tackle some very formidable problems.

5.19 pm

**Lord Dholakia (LD):** My Lords, I wish to concentrate on matters relating to home affairs in the gracious Speech. My starting point is that the many calls from the public and politicians for tough punishments for that minority of offenders convicted of crimes involving violence, drugs or sex are not incompatible with the desire to see fewer offenders in prisoners; it is simply to say that, as a society, we should be aiming to send fewer people to prison.

A number of the specific announcements contained in the Queen's Speech will make useful improvements to the criminal justice system. The proposal to put the rights of victims of crime, which are currently enshrined in a non-statutory victims' code, on a statutory footing will receive widespread support. I welcome a number of the proposals in the proposed policing and criminal justice Bill, particularly the limitations on the use and length of police bail and measures to reduce the use of police cells as a place of safety for mentally ill people.

I also welcome legislation to tackle the problem of "legal highs". I am pleased to see that the proposed Psychoactive Substances Bill will not include an offence of personal possession of these drugs. It is both more humane and more effective to channel drug users into treatment and education programmes rather than into the criminal justice system. We should reserve criminal penalties for those who exploit users by manufacturing and trading in drugs.

Although I welcome some of the specific announcements in the Queen's Speech, I am bound to say that I would like to see a far more radical approach to address the serious challenges facing our criminal justice system. The size of our prison population, which stood at 84,372 in mid-May, remains a national disgrace. At the end of March 2015, 70 of the 117 prisons in England and Wales were holding more prisoners than they were built for. This country now has 149 prisoners for every 100,000 people in the general population, compared with 100 in France and 77 in Germany.

Far too many offenders are still sent into custody for short sentences and are released after no more than a few months. These sentences serve very little useful purpose. They are far too short for sustained rehabilitation programmes but long enough for offenders to lose their jobs and homes and make them more likely to reoffend. Fifty-eight per cent of these prisoners are reconvicted within a year of release and many of them return to prison repeatedly for short sentences in a pointless and depressing revolving-door process.

The coalition Government legislated to provide post-release supervision for short-term prisoners, which is undoubtedly a step forward. However, most of these offenders would be better dealt with by community orders. Offenders given community orders have a reoffending rate seven percentage points lower than that for similar offenders given short prison sentences. Community orders can provide a longer period of

[LORD DHOLAKIA]

supervision and more intensive work to change offending behaviour than can relatively short periods of post-release supervision.

The penal system, like other public services, has had to face significant spending cuts over the past few years as the price of the country's recovery from the economic crisis. As a result, over the last four years the number of prison staff in public sector prisons has fallen by 29%—this means nearly 13,000 fewer staff. The amount of purposeful activity in prisons has fallen in consequence, as the reports of the Chief Inspector of Prisons have repeatedly made clear.

We know that budgets are now set to tighten further as the Chancellor seeks another £13 billion of cuts to Whitehall departments, and the Institute for Fiscal Studies has estimated that the Ministry of Justice budget will reduce by one-third. When resources are so stretched we need to make sure that we are using them in the best possible way. We need to rethink an approach that spends such a high proportion of its resources on custodial measures which produce high reoffending rates. The Government should legislate to make sentencing guidelines take into account the capacity of the prison system. The proposal was first made by the Carter report on the prison system in 2007 and it still makes sense.

At a time when all the other public services have to work within the reality of limited resources, there is no reason why the courts should be exempt. Sentencing guidelines should scale down the number and length of prison sentences, except for the most serious crimes. They should remove prison as an option for low-level, non-violent crimes. Courts should be prohibited from using prisons except for dangerous offenders unless they have first tried an intensive community supervision programme. We should also convert the sentences of the many IPP prisoners who remain in our prisons, even though the sentence was rightly abolished by the coalition, by converting them into determinate sentences once they have served a period equivalent to double their tariff.

We also need a clear strategy to reduce the use of imprisonment for women. Most of the women we send to prison are neither violent nor dangerous, and most of them have few previous convictions. Imprisoned women have high rates of mental disorder, histories of abuse, addiction problems and personal distress arising from separation from their children. I supported the coalition Government's move to set up an expert advisory board on women's imprisonment. However, we should now go further to establish a women's justice board to set improved standards for women's community sentences, resettlement and rehabilitation, mental health services, family contact, and culturally appropriate support for foreign national women in our prisons.

We should do more to keep restorative justice at the forefront of sentences and make sure that it becomes a central part of our criminal justice system. Research has shown that 27% fewer crimes are committed by offenders who have experienced restorative conferencing than those who have not.

A great deal remains to be done to eliminate racial discrimination from the criminal justice process. The disproportionate use of stop and search is even more extreme than it was when the Stephen Lawrence inquiry reported, and the proportion of the prison population from racial minorities is now higher than it was then: 10% of British nationals in prison are black, compared with 2.8% of the general population, and 6% are Asian. According to the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the number of black people in prison is now more disproportionate in the United Kingdom than in the United States.

Finally, as I have repeatedly urged in this House, we should also raise this country's unusually low age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12. It would be more effective and more humane to deal with offenders under that age in family courts, as other European countries do. A strategy along these lines would help to move this country away from its unenviable position of having the highest prison population in western Europe. In doing so, it would help to concentrate our limited resources on the measures that are most likely to protect the public by rehabilitating offenders and reducing reoffending.

5.28 pm

**Lord Laird (Non-Aff):** My Lords, under the heading of home affairs I want to look at two issues that could affect the human rights of the citizens of the UK. Mention of human rights is included in the gracious Speech, and I wish to look at the activities that are under the heading of Prism.

I want to put on record that I am an admirer of the USA, coming as I do from the Ulster Scots community, which to date has provided 17 Presidents of the United States and many others who were responsible for the formation of that nation as a beacon of independent thinking and freedom. I raise this issue more in sorrow than in anger. My understanding is that Prism is a mass surveillance programme operated in many countries, including the UK. I also understand that it is no part of any scheme operated by the UK information-gathering agencies. Instead, the programme is run by nine major internet companies registered in the UK, which are wholly owned by US parent corporations. They have been required by the US Government to intercept and obtain information from their clients in every field of communications technology that they provide. The Government have known about this activity since 2013, according to the then Foreign Secretary, William Hague, in a letter of June that year. Interestingly, Sir Anthony May QC, the Interception of Communications Commissioner, told the PM in a report of 8 April 2014 that warrantless interception was a criminal offence. He also pointed out that the theft of data was a breach of Article 8 of the human rights convention of 1948.

Coming very close to home, data collected through Prism from your Lordships' House is stored in the Irish Republic and the Netherlands, according to a letter to John Hemming, then an MP, from the Foreign Secretary on 2 September 2014. When I made inquiries into the Dublin storage, I was informed by someone who should know that the protection against Prism is internally described as being like two cans and a bit of string. Dublin is wide open to data theft.



In the parchment copy of the US Declaration of Independence of 1776, a document in which Ulster Scots people had a vital role, a paragraph goes thus:

“Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us”.

In the light of that paragraph, it is interesting to note that the American Senate is very much exercised in the processing of information gathered in the US, as witnessed by last Sunday's special sitting when it stopped the practice at home. Members of the Intelligence and Security Committee have told inquirers that Prism is a US issue. However, if it is still in operation in the UK it is an issue for this Government. It is a criminal offence, according to Sir Anthony May QC. Who tells us that Prism runs in the UK? The Investigatory Powers Tribunal, which ruled in December last and in February in the Liberty case that data obtained by the National Security Agency via Prism in the UK, and supplied to GCHQ, were unlawfully obtained. I hope that in this Session HMG will take all necessary steps to regularise the position and to keep your Lordships' House informed as much as possible.

I turn to another human rights issue. The Irish are a very likeable people, except when some of them are involved in politics. Unfortunately, they allow themselves to get carried away into the Celtic mist. We must be aware of their behaviour and make allowances in HMG's decision-making. One such mist already seems to surround the area of human rights for those who live in the part of the United Kingdom called Northern Ireland. To some of us, it seems that busloads of so-called experts descend on our Province and offer us advice on human rights. If these experts were gardeners offering to work in my garden, I would take a common-sense approach by checking over their garden before I allowed them into mine. Let me apply that process to human rights, always bearing in mind that the Belfast agreement of 1998 has much to say on the topic and is often recited to us as an example.

The Belfast agreement of 10 April 1998, in the section under “Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity” on page 31 and in paragraph 3, lists steps by the Irish Government comparable to those for HMG. In this, the Irish Government pledged measures that will ensure at least an equivalent amount of protection of human rights as pertains in Northern Ireland. Let us take some simple, recent examples in the Republic that could affect family life. To this day, anyone seeking state funding to provide clothing for a child's religious activities, or a couple who seek counselling about marriage, will receive state help, but only if they are, according to the law, of the majority community in religious terms. When it comes to buying a house, to this day the rights listed on page 23 of the Belfast agreement to freely choose one's place of residence do not apply in the Republic. In areas of that state, property can be sold only to those with a qualification in the Irish language. This discriminates against non-Irish people such as me. The Irish Parliament agreed to pay for the compensation and expenses of children caught up in abuse by church organisations but only if it is the Roman Catholic Church.

I was a member of the Stormont Parliament, which was abolished in 1972 at the behest of the Irish. That Parliament operated under legislation set out in the Government of Ireland Act 1920. Under this, and rightly, if it legislated against anyone on the grounds of religion, the Bill was null and void under Section 5 of that Act. Administration by the Northern Ireland Parliament with the same purpose was null and void under Section 8. The Irish Parliament has no such restriction, however, yet they criticise the UK for its bad record on human rights. Recently the position would have become laughable if it was not so serious. The Irish are telling the world that the UK agreed a Human Rights Act as part of the Belfast agreement of April 1998. The Act referred to was put in place only in November 1998, so how could the UK give an undertaking to something that had not at that stage materialised? How can the Irish claim that Sinn Fein must have a say in changes to the Human Rights Act because they agreed to the Belfast agreement, when the Act was not in the agreement?

I will be most interested in the consultations on human rights outlined in the Queen's Speech. A simple question will be: why does one part of any country require more human rights than another? I ask HMG to examine the human rights in the Irish Republic. After all, HMG underwrote the implementation of the agreement in the Republic as well as the UK—a point that is often forgotten—to appease the Irish Government.

5.37 pm

**Viscount Ridley (Con):** My Lords, I join others in paying tribute to the magnificent valedictory speech of my noble friend Lord Eden and the fine maiden speech of the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Salisbury. I want to address my remarks to energy, by echoing some of what my noble friend Lord Wakeham said. In doing so, I declare my interests in energy as listed in the register, including interests in coal mining in Northumberland.

I welcome the fact that the gracious Speech includes a special emphasis on security of energy supplies because that is a crucial question. The Conservative manifesto promised to, “guarantee clean, affordable and secure energy supplies”, and in that context the Science and Technology Committee, on which I sit, very recently produced a report, ably chaired by my noble friend Lord Selborne, on the resilience of the electricity supply. It would make good reading for the Minister because it said that the trilemma between security, affordability and decarbonisation is effectively insoluble in the current state of technology. If you want security, you have to pay extra for it whether by spare capacity, demand-side response, storage or emergency reserve. Wind could provide us with all our energy securely if we all had gigantic batteries in our houses, which lasted for several days when the wind did not work, but it would be ludicrously expensive. If you want to decarbonise on top of that then you have to pay even more for it. You cannot have all three at the same time in the current state of technology. Does the Minister, or do his colleagues if he wishes to pass this on to those more directly involved, agree with the conclusions of that report?

[VISCOUNT RIDLEY]

I would like to make the case that target-driven decarbonisation has made energy less affordable and less secure, and that the poor have borne the burden of this during the last five years. How else do we explain the deal that was signed for Hinkley Point C nuclear power station? Let me emphasise that, like my noble friend Lord Wakeham, I am very pro-nuclear. It is a wonderful technology but in this case we may have made a mistake. How do we explain that except by admitting that affordability has been sacrificed to decarbonisation? Hinkley C is a poor deal for the British people. The cost has gone from £5 billion to £16 billion to £24 billion. That is 30% more per megawatt of capacity than the cost of the same technology as it is being built in France today. We could have got 10 times as much electricity from gas-fired power stations for that cost.

Areva's EPR—the European pressurised water reactor—is a flawed technology: not one has been built to time or budget anywhere in the world. The EPR at Flamanville is five years behind schedule, the one at Olkiluoto in Finland is 10 years behind schedule and already delays are setting in with the third one, which is being built in China. The Flamanville one may be abandoned altogether after serious anomalies were recently found in the reactor vessel. Areva is a French, state-owned company that posted losses last year of €4.8 billion—more than its entire market value—and is being sued for €2 billion in Finland.

The French and Chinese Governments will earn between £65 billion and £85 billion of dividends from British consumers during the lifetime of Hinkley C, according to the contract. Hinkley's electricity will be expensive: roughly twice what people pay today by the time it opens in the 2020s. Under the coalition, Energy Ministers argued that this would be okay because that would be competitive with gas prices by the mid-2020s, because gas prices were bound to rise as gas ran out. However, gas prices have gone down and gas is not running out, so the gap is growing ever larger. Can my noble friend say what financial guarantees are in place if EDF starts the project and then pulls out, and what guarantees are EDF and Areva giving to avoid a repeat of the Flamanville and Olkiluoto problems?

I emphasise again that I am not arguing against nuclear. Far from it, I think it has a huge future in delivering affordable and decarbonised energy eventually, along with other technologies. There are two other nuclear new-build projects making good progress in this country: Hitachi at Wylfa and Oldbury, and Toshiba at Moorside in Cumbria. Then there are small modular reactors, molten salt reactors and all sorts of other technologies coming along for nuclear that will help to make it more affordable, more secure and decarbonised. My case is that, in our rush to decarbonise, we may have backed the wrong horse. As a policy, picking winners is rightly considered to be a mistake, but at the moment in energy policy we are not even picking winners; we are picking losers. Given that the Conservative Party is now the party of working people, can we have an assurance that we will pay more attention to affordability of energy than we have done in the last five years?

To switch to another subject, alarm bells are ringing about security of electricity supply. If nothing else, the imminent closure of Ferrybridge coal-fired power station seven years early should sound a klaxon of alarm. It is closing because of the carbon floor price, which is a unilateral UK tax. Our carbon tax is more than four times as high as in much of Europe: we pay £23 a tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> compared with £5 in Europe. The closure of Ferrybridge shows that the capacity market is failing to do what it was intended to do; it is failing to bring forward new capacity.

As recently as 2011-12, the Government were expecting 6 to 8 gigawatts of new gas to come forward as a result of capacity market auctions. Instead the capacity market auction has accelerated the closure of old capacity. Ferrybridge's failure to win a share of that market is what led to its commercial decision to close early. It was the same for Longannet a few months ago. Between the two of them, that is 6% of our capacity for electricity generation gone. Will other dominos follow them? There has to be a question mark over Eggborough. It is a large coal-fired power station that applied to convert to biomass and had permission refused. Its Czech owners may well at some point reconsider their decision to keep it open. Does my noble friend expect to see more coal-fired power station closures over the next few years? How will we ensure security of supply?

I end by mentioning something that was brought up by the noble Lord, Lord Layard. The global Apollo programme, of which he is one of the seven authors, was published yesterday and calls for an attempt to get renewable energy cheaper than fossil fuel energy. Although I have some disagreements with some of the things in that paper, they are absolutely right about one thing: it is only by making renewable energy competitive that we will solve this problem. They make the point, very ably, that spending \$101 billion a year globally on production subsidies for renewable energy and only \$6 billion on research and development for renewable energy has it the wrong way round. They make a good point there.

5.45 pm

**Lord Beecham (Lab):** My Lords, I will speak in particular about local government, whose problems did not largely feature in what passed for debate in the recent election campaign. I refer to my local government interests in the register.

I begin by congratulating the Minister on her appointment and, since we are fated to have a Conservative Government, by welcoming the appointment of Greg Clark as Secretary of State. Not only has he demonstrated a constructive interest in local government but he hails from the north-east, having been born in Middlesbrough. It would also be churlish not to congratulate his predecessor, Eric Pickles, who has been knighted—although some of us have thought him benighted for a long time.

I welcome the principle of the devolution of powers envisaged by the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill and the potential for carrying forward the concept of “total place”, which was proposed originally by the LGA and adopted by the Labour Government, but which has rather withered on the vine in the last five

years. It is a principle that should be extended across the whole of local government, not just a few essentially urban areas.

However, it should not depend on the adoption of a mayoral system, which was rejected by all but one city when the Government required referendums to be held in 11 areas in 2012 and which three authorities—Stoke, Hartlepool and Doncaster—have abandoned after experiencing the system in practice. Tower Hamlets is a reminder of the dangers of concentrating too much power in a single pair of hands, and that is a relatively small authority.

To establish such a powerful position without express public support would be unacceptable, especially when, remarkably, it appears that the role could include that of the police commissioners, elected only three years ago on turnouts, I remind your Lordships, of all of 15%. A fundamental change to a mayoral system should be implemented only with public support, perhaps after securing that support in a referendum and requiring a majority within each constituent area.

It is clear that the proposed Greater Manchester Combined Authority deal will go ahead, and I urge the Government—in the light of that, and potentially further expanding the concept—to take this opportunity to reinstate the concept of government regional offices, created originally by a Conservative Government in the 1980s. This would help to facilitate effective collaboration between Whitehall departments and agencies and local authorities. Providing a two-way conduit for that conversation proved very successful in the past.

However, while recognising the potential benefits of a devolution package—to which Labour was also, and in fact earlier, committed—it is necessary to ensure that sufficient finance follows the transfer of responsibilities; or, to repeat a phrase I have used more than once in your Lordships' House, to ensure that the Government, or any Government, does not pass the buck without passing the bucks. It is all very well to talk of councils retaining business rates or perhaps levying other taxes, but that will avail little if the relevant tax base is low and insufficient to meet the area's needs.

Moreover, there must be a concern that when it comes to issues such as social security benefits, which may be, as it were, delegated under a devolved structure, we will see a further move away from national standards towards a variable 19th-century Poor Law pattern of provision. Any transfer of responsibilities in this area should be based on having minimum national entitlements.

Councils are already facing unprecedented pressures on their budgets and services, with the expectation of worse to come. Across the country, and across the political divide, councils and their leaders are warning the Government that the position is unsustainable. From Surrey to South Tyneside, Dorset to Doncaster, the situation is the same, and the now Conservative-led Local Government Association reflects the concerns of its members. Will the Government at last listen?

In Newcastle alone, the council has had to contend with cuts in specific grants and the main revenue grant of more than 41% in real terms, with significantly more to come, and with a severe impact on services: both in visible services, for example the state of the

roads and the environment, and in the less immediately obvious but perhaps in some respects more important ones such as adult and children's services.

The pressure on the least well off in our communities is unrelenting. In Newcastle, 4,879 households—25% of them working households—are being hit by the pernicious bedroom tax at a cost of £3.66 million a year. In addition, the appalling changes to council tax benefit have resulted in arrears of £2.175 million for 2014-15 alone; 45% of that is from people in employment—a mark of the low wages that they have. Some £6 million has been lost to the local economy from people who previously did not have to pay full council tax but who now have to pay it. So the money is lost not only to them but to the local economy. How can the Government justify that kind of outcome at a time when they are prepared to buy votes, for instance by increasing the inheritance tax threshold for the 10% best-off people in the country? That is another lamentable example of buying votes ultimately at the expense of those most in need.

There is also an issue around local government that may not have received much attention—that is, how the Government have generally distributed their support, which has had a particularly damaging effect on areas most affected by the cuts, notably the inner city but also coastal towns. Will the Government reconsider the distribution mechanism? For how much longer will council tax be based on evaluations already 24 years old, in a system that after all embodies an element of the poll tax, in which the difference between the lowest and highest bands results in those in the latter paying only three times that paid by those in the former?

I shall touch on a couple of other matters. It is clear that the Government are determined to press ahead with their relentless promotion of academies and free schools, irrespective of local need and at the expense of investing in local authority provision. We are seeing a continual erosion of local council involvement—I stress that it is involvement that is at stake, not control of schools, which ended long ago—in a crucial public service. Wherein lies the local accountability for our children's future?

Then there is housing, where the Government's record has been one of unredeemed failure. I entirely concur with the passionate statement made by my noble friend Lady Hollis. The proposal about housing association homes is quite intolerable and totally unlikely to have any impact on housing waiting lists. In my own authority in Newcastle, for example, lists have grown by 37% in the past three years to 5,800. Nothing in the Government's housing policy is likely to help these people—quite the reverse.

I am sorry to say that DCLG Ministers have failed for the last five years to defend local government and the people whom it serves. I hope that under new management the department will recognise and support the crucial role that democratically elected councils play in the life of their communities and the nation. There is, sadly, and notwithstanding the potential of the proposals in the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, all too little evidence of such an intention—or none that emerged in the election campaign or, indeed, in the gracious Speech.

5.53 pm

**Lord Greaves (LD):** I want to speak mainly about housing and, in so doing, I remind the House of my various declared interests and particularly that of being deputy leader of Pendle Council. I have been interested to hear all sorts of spokespeople claiming that the new Conservative Government have a massive mandate for pretty well every detail in their manifesto. I suggest that this is nonsense; they clearly won the election under the first-past-the-post system and have the right to form a Government, but they did so on 37% of the vote, which means that nearly two out of three people who voted voted against the present Government. Indeed, only 25% of eligible voters voted for them. So the idea that they have an overwhelming commitment by the people of this country to all the things in their manifesto is a slightly dodgy argument.

I was extremely interested in the extraordinarily good speech by the noble Baroness, Lady Hollis of Heigham, on housing associations and social housing. We look forward to the housing Bill coming to this House, at least in a chronological sense, if not in the sense of its contents. I would advise the Government, if they ever listen to me, to look very carefully indeed at that speech, reprint it and get lots of advice on it. It referred to a huge number of the problems that the Bill will have, if reports are true, and the debates that will take place on it here, as well as the problems that the Government will have in persuading us that they are right on these matters.

I shall take a brief total overview of housing in this country. There is nothing original about what I am going to say, but it is worth putting it yet again on record. First, owner-occupation is for many people a good thing. It means that people own their own houses and put their efforts, money and resources into that property to keep it in good condition. Very often, people in owner-occupied houses live in those houses for longer than those who live in private rented accommodation, so it is good for creating communities. However, this was not always Conservative policy. In the 1930s and 1950s, the idea of ownership for all, as it was called, was promoted by the Liberal Party, particularly by that stalwart Yorkshire Liberal, Elliott Dodds. That received a lukewarm reception from the Conservatives until Harold Macmillan got a grip on it, and got a grip on the housebuilding programme in the 1950s.

For many people, however, owning their house is either not possible, or only marginally possible, or not convenient. We have to remember that and make proper provision for those people who cannot do so. Certainly, in the first half of the 20th century, the Conservatives were more interested in private landlords. It is worth looking at the statistics over the years. In 1918, only 23% of properties were owner-occupied, there was virtually no social housing as we know it, and the private rented sector was 77% of the total housing stock. By the middle of the 1950s, that was reversed and by 2005, which was the peak of owner-occupation, it was 69% of all housing. By 1990, the private rented sector had gone down to 9%. These are a mixture of English and UK figures, but they are very similar anyhow. Yet by 2013, the proportion of people owning their own houses had started to go down; in

that year, it was only 63%, whereas it had been 69%. Social housing had filled the gap; originally it was council housing, which at one stage occupied most of the rented housing market. Yet council housing has been in decline and the rise in social housing has not filled the gap. In 1980, 31% of houses in the UK were owned by local authorities; that figure is now down to 7%. The change that has taken place is astonishing. Housing associations have come in with 10%, but the amount of social rented housing has gone down from 31% in 1980 to 18% in 2013. Of course, the private rented sector is filling the gap; having gone down from 77% in 1918 to 9% in 1990, it is now back up to 20%.

The deregulation of rents and the rights of tenants has had a huge effect—but another reason for this change is that if you go to council estates anywhere in the country you see “to let” boards up. Those are on houses owned by private landlords. Council estates are being sold cheap to tenants, and when the purchasers move on for very good reasons, they put them on the market and buy-to-let people move in. In January 2014, London Assembly Member Tom Copley—he is not in my party, but that does not matter—produced a report, *From Right to Buy to Buy to Let*. Although the statistics are difficult to pin down because the Government do not tend to keep them, he found that, by 2013, at least 36% of homes in London sold cheaply under right to buy had been sold on to private landlords. That figure will obviously now be higher. In three boroughs, it was around half. One of the fundamental questions is: why will it be different under right to buy from housing associations?

When this Bill comes, I shall tell the House all about the situation in Pendle, which is very different from London. It is a low-price housing area. Rents and house prices are low, but the impossibility of replacing existing stock as it is sold off is the same. There are different reasons, but it is just the same.

In her opening speech, which was admirably succinct and coherent, the Minister said that 90% of people aspire to owner-occupation. This strange word “aspiration” seems to be taking over political debate at the moment in all parties. I do not quite know what it means. We all aspire to all sorts of things. I might aspire to owing an express steam locomotive and being able to drive it up and down the main lines of this country, but I am never going to do it. I would love to do it. If someone says, “Would you like to do it?”, I will say, “Yeah, great idea—I’d love it”, but when it comes to politics, aspiration seems to be a nice word, a euphemism, that actually means ways of bribing voters with public money to vote for a political party. That seems fundamentally wrong. There is a severe housing crisis in this country. The Government are not tackling it—no Governments have adequately tackled it in my time—and the proposals for right to buy in social housing are seriously misconceived.

6.03 pm

**Lord Kerslake (CB) (Maiden Speech):** My Lords, I want to touch on three issues in my speech today: local government, devolution and housing.

But let me first say how delighted I am to have become a Member of this House. It seems a long journey from the small village primary school in Somerset,

where my father was the head teacher. He left school without qualifications and lied about his age in order to join the Royal Air Force and fight in Bomber Command. Subsequently, he trained as a teacher, having caught up on his education in a prisoner-of-war camp. My mother came over from Ireland to train as a nurse and they met at the Royal United in Bath after the war, where my father was being treated for an injury he sustained when he was shot down over Germany—I am in almost every sense a product of the NHS. To use the current in-vogue phrase, my parents were not just aspirational for their children; they were fiercely ambitious. The route to success for them was for their children to make the very most of a good state education. My only sadness is that neither is here today to listen to this speech.

I sit as a Cross-Bencher, having served political Administrations led by all three of the main political parties. Since standing down from the Civil Service, I have taken on a number of new roles, including chair of King's College Hospital, chair of Peabody housing association and chair of the Centre for Public Scrutiny. I declare these as interests in the debate today.

Let me turn first to local government. By some margin, the biggest issue facing local authorities is the prospect of further significant spending reductions in this Parliament. They will follow on from some of the largest budget reductions experienced by any part of the public sector in the previous Parliament. In my view, local government acquitted itself well during that exceptionally demanding period: staffing was reduced, back-office services were shared and efficiencies were found, but every effort was made to protect front-line services, particularly for the most vulnerable. The temptation for this Government would be to conclude that, because local government performed so well in the previous Parliament, all that is needed is simply to re-run the record. That would be a grave error. The inevitable consequence would be a deterioration in the visible services, such as street cleaning, and massive pressure on the social care budgets, in turn adding to the considerable pressures on the NHS.

To avoid this, a much more comprehensive approach will be needed which looks specifically at social care, revisits the distribution of funding between authorities, considers new sources of income and promotes the integration of local public services. Close working with the Local Government Association and the sector will be essential. This will not make the task easy or risk free. The alternative, though, will be a great deal worse.

The greatest opportunity for local government in this Parliament, and my second theme, is the prospect of greater devolution. I have long been a passionate advocate of devolution as a way to promote economic growth and improve public services. Since my time as chief executive of Sheffield City Council, I have also championed the economic potential of our major cities outside London. So for me, the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, which received its First Reading in this House last week, is entirely welcome. It provides the opportunity to build on the ground-breaking deal done by the previous Government with Greater Manchester and deliver far-reaching devolution

of powers and budgets to boost local growth. I was fortunate to work closely with the new Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Greg Clark, on the city and local growth deals. I saw at first hand the skill, creativity and attention to detail he brought to that and the success he made of that initiative. One of the most striking features of the Minister's approach was his inclusivity, so that every part of the country benefited from a deal. It is important that this inclusive approach is also followed on devolution, so that the opportunities are not confined just to cities and not just to those city regions that are ready to agree to a metro mayor.

In his foreword to the excellent City Growth Commission report, the noble Lord, Lord O'Neill, refers to "ManSheffLeedsPool"—get your mind around that one—as an area of 7 million people that could provide the economic scale to compare with London. I very much hope, therefore, that the Sheffield city region will follow on soon to benefit from the opportunities of this Bill. The noble Lord, Lord Scriven, spoke eloquently about Sheffield in his maiden speech in December. With the brilliant Advanced Manufacturing Park in Rotherham, the new National College for High Speed Rail in Doncaster and the key development sites at Markham Vale and junction 31 of the M1, the area has enormous economic opportunities. It has a well-regarded local enterprise partnership and a combined authority chaired by one of the most experienced and able leaders in local government, Sir Steve Houghton. It is in everyone's interests that discussions to build on the deal agreed at end of the previous Parliament begin soon. One important issue that should be revisited as part of these discussions is the location of the HS2 station in Sheffield. The impact on growth, jobs and business rates if this is located in the centre of Sheffield is significantly higher than the alternative of an out-of-town parkway station. It also keeps open the future opportunity to create a genuine economic powerhouse through improved connectivity with Leeds and Manchester.

The third and final area that I want to talk about today is housing. There were a lot of good and productive initiatives in the coalition Government to promote the building of more housing and more affordable homes. It is with great regret, therefore, that I find myself so completely opposed to the Government's proposals to extend right to buy to housing associations and to force local authorities to sell off their highest-value properties as they become vacant. In its current form, this policy seems to me to be both wrong in principle and wrong in practice. It is wrong in principle because these are not the Government's assets to sell. Housing associations are private, mostly charitable, bodies. They have built up their housing stock over long periods of time to provide for those who are most in need. Peabody, for example, has been in existence for 153 years, only 40 of which have involved any public subsidy.

To fund the cost of the discounts, local authorities will be compelled to sell their highest-value properties as they become vacant. There is a good case for local authorities being able selectively to sell off some of their high-value properties to reinvest. However, a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach is contrary to the spirit of greater devolution and will bring with it

[LORD KERSLAKE]

unintended consequences. In London, for example, the top third by value of properties will be concentrated in the central London boroughs of Wandsworth, Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea, which stand to lose nearly two-thirds of their stock over time.

The plans are wrong in practice because they will not advance the Government's stated aims; indeed, I fear that they will move them backwards. Housing associations have been key players in the delivery of new housing in recent years, accounting for over one-third of all new housing. Many have built not just for rent but for sale. They have developed some excellent and innovative schemes to promote home ownership. These new homes, however, are substantially funded through private borrowing against future rental streams. The proposed RTB policy, combined with changes in benefits, will make housing associations much more cautious about investing in new-build programmes and, crucially, lenders much more cautious about lending. The knock-on consequences of this on new-build and regeneration schemes could be very serious.

There are also real doubts in my mind as to whether the receipts from the sale of high-value local authority properties can simultaneously cover the cost of the discount, the re-provision of new affordable homes and a contribution to the brownfield regeneration fund. At the very least this should be subject to a full independent financial review. What is clear, though, is that there would be a substantial flow of funds out of London, potentially of the order of £5 billion, to other parts of the country to make the numbers balance. The level of sales in London could reach 5,000 a year, which would be almost impossible for the London boroughs to match with new-build affordable homes—a fact borne out by the current experience of the one-for-one policy. This loss of affordable homes and redistribution of funds out of London at a time when its housing needs are so acute seems to be completely counterproductive.

For all these reasons, and for the others set out so well by others, including the noble Lord, Lord Best, I urge the Government to reconsider. They should meet urgently with the sector to discuss how the policy can be amended and its deficiencies addressed. Ultimately, the route to more home ownership, which I support passionately, is to build more homes. There is a real risk that this policy will distract from that vital, urgent task.

These three issues—local government, devolution and housing—are my current passions. In time, no doubt, drawing on my experience from the brilliant King's College Hospital, I am likely to add health. I look forward to contributing to these debates in future.

6.14 pm

**Lord Best (CB):** My Lords, I am delighted to follow the noble Lord, Lord Kerslake, and I congratulate him on a very significant maiden speech. After a distinguished career in local government, he was an outstanding chief executive of the Homes and Communities Agency before going on to be both Permanent Secretary at the Department for Communities and Local Government and head of the Home Civil Service. These are impeccable

credentials for contributing to our deliberations and his speech today assures us that he will be a wise, influential and most welcome addition to this House.

My comments in this debate take forward some of the points on the forthcoming housing Bill made by the noble Lord, Lord Kerslake, and other Peers, including the noble Baroness, Lady Hollis. I am sure that there will be some helpful and positive ingredients in the new housing Bill since I believe that the Government are sincere in their stated aim to increase housing supply and, indeed, to meet their target of adding some 275,000 affordable homes over the lifetime of this Parliament. The problem is that a key component in the Bill is likely to completely undermine their good intentions if it is not greatly modified.

The Bill's problematic ingredient has two related parts: first, a requirement on charitable housing associations to sell their properties at substantial discounts—up to more than £103,000 in London and £77,000 elsewhere—to tenants who have lived there for three years or more; and secondly, a requirement on local councils to sell their most valuable properties on the open market in order to raise the money for those costly housing association discounts. I see that I am in good company in questioning the wisdom of this two-part policy: the *Economist*, the *Spectator*, the *Telegraph* and the *London Evening Standard* alongside the Mayor of London are among the critics, as is Martin Woolf in the *Financial Times*, under the heading:

“Tories wrong to buy votes with housing”.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has called this right-to-buy extension a “substantial giveaway” and warns of harm to the UK public finances over the longer term.

I shall summarise the objections to this policy initiative. First, in relation to housing policy, there are hundreds of thousands of households that are unable to buy but are crippled by the cost of open market renting. For all these, the target of 275,000 extra affordable homes by 2020 is essential and, with government backing, definitely achievable. However, the National Housing Federation estimates that about 221,000 households, out of 1.5 million identified by the Government as eligible, are in a position to buy—and why should they not take advantage of this sudden lucky windfall? If these tenants purchase over the next five years, and if councils over that period are required to sell thousands of their best properties to raise the funds to pay for the housing association discounts, then the social housing providers will have tried to fill the bath with the plug out. At the end of this Parliament, instead of increasing the stock of affordable homes that the country needs so badly, all these efforts will have been in vain and, at best, we will be back where we started.

Moreover, the whole process of selling some social housing and building elsewhere will have grave consequences. With councils having to sell in the best areas and having to build in cheaper places, a divisive segregation results, separating the better-off and the less affluent, in contradiction to the universally preferred alternative of mixed communities. As the London mayor has pointed out, replacing the homes sold in London with homes built outside will deny London the key workers on which this city depends, while affordable homes sold off in rural communities will often be quite impossible to replace.

Secondly, the financial considerations of this double measure are alarming. The National Housing Federation estimates that the cost could be around £11.5 billion. Do these payments to a relatively small number of people represent the very best use of several billion pounds? A windfall grant to those already in decent affordable housing seems strange indeed when the money could help thousands of others in severe housing need. According to the National Housing Federation, this level of funds would, for example, secure no less than 660,000 shared ownership homes, helping three times as many aspiring owner-occupiers.

Moreover, what happens if selling good council housing as it falls vacant fails to raise all the funds to cover the cost of the new discounts, let alone pay for the councils to replace the homes they sell off? Can the Minister confirm that whatever the cost, housing associations will be guaranteed reimbursement for the loss of their assets? Will the taxpayer pick up the bill, regardless of the impact on the public finances?

Thirdly, and finally, there are some serious legal and practical objections to this policy. In the 1980s this House very firmly rejected the extension of the right to buy to charitable housing associations, principally on the grounds that government should not be ordering independent charitable bodies to dispose of their assets to the benefit of some tenants of today but at the cost of diminishing the charity's capacity to help others in need in the future.

On the practical side, there are worries about the response of lenders to the new uncertainties that this measure creates. There are also concerns about planning agreements, which have required a proportion of rented homes in private developments to be retained in perpetuity for those on lower incomes, never to be sold. Are these planning agreements now to be torn up, and will the housing associations be forced to renege on promises to landowners who have given land or sold cheaply, on rural exception sites, for the benefit of their local communities? If so, this is surely an end to such concessions in the future.

Clearly there are serious housing policy, financial, legal and practical difficulties to this multibillion-pound initiative. It looks incredibly fraught. I conclude by asking the Minister: will there now be extensive consultation on the new policy, not least with Members of this House, before it is taken to its next stage?

**Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Con):** My Lords, I ask for noble Lords' indulgence and assistance. Our timings are such that if we continue to have the length of speeches that we have had, the House will sit very late indeed. The advisory time of seven minutes is to ensure that the House rises at a respectable time, and I am sure that your Lordships would wish me to be helpful in that regard.

6.22 pm

**Lord Holmes of Richmond (Con):** My Lords, in the spirit of that announcement, I am prepared to give up those 20 seconds of my time to the Deputy Chief Whip for that announcement.

I will focus on energy, but before I do that, I congratulate in particular the two Ministers who are bookending this debate this afternoon and evening,

who, although they were both members of the previous Government, have now been elevated to high ministerial office. My noble friends Lady Williams of Trafford and Lord Bates, with his north-eastern credentials, as a duo demonstrate quite magnificently what we can get from the northern powerhouse.

I also congratulate the two maiden speakers today. We heard two marvellous speeches, latterly from the noble Lord, Lord Kerslake, and formerly from the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Salisbury. It would certainly be fair to say that whoever else joins the right reverend Prelate on the Bishops' Bench, none of them can compete with the fact that he has the highest spire in the United Kingdom. All our proceedings will benefit from the bird's-eye perspective from that vantage point of 123 metres. I also congratulate my noble friend Lord Eden on a thoughtful and extraordinary valedictory speech. If all of us can seek to have a career of such distinction, we will all have used our time incredibly wisely.

To focus on energy, specifically sustainable, renewable energy, I must remark on a comment that was made in the recent general election campaign by a prospective parliamentary candidate. It would be wrong of me to say which party that PPC was standing for, but in a debate on new energy this prospective candidate asked, "That's all well and good, but what happens when the renewable energy runs out?". As I say, I will not mention the party—but it has only four letters in its title.

Fortunately, renewable energy, as its name somewhat suggests, will not run out, but it is a great step forward that the subsidies for onshore wind farms are being brought to a conclusion for new projects going forward. I am a supporter of renewable energy; we need to have as many diverse sources of energy in the mix as we can possibly get. However, with wind turbines we are at a level at which, by any measure, it is questionable on a cost-benefit analysis whether putting funding there gives us the best energy mix and, crucially, the security of supply that we need going forward. We have already heard about £101 billion globally going into subsidies; only £6 billion goes into research and development. I want us to be pioneers—I want us to be at the forefront, to develop the best technology—but if you look at wind turbines and compare them to technological advances in almost any other industry, they look pretty much like yesterday. That is not to mention their impact on the environment: they slaughter golden eagles and kites out of the sky, create a whirring noise whether the turbine's blades are turning or not, and turn stomachs for miles around. That cannot be the technology of the future. I ask the Minister to consider whether, as long as the renewable obligations come to an end in 2017, it should be clear that contracts for difference are also seen as subsidies and will also be treated under this policy. I believe they should be.

Similarly, I turn to Scotland, which as a nation suffers the brunt of wind turbine technology. Of the schemes currently seeking planning, over 1,600 out of 2,800 are looking to be sited in the uplands of Scotland, which will have a significant impact on the environment. Therefore my second question for the Minister is: will that end to the subsidy going forward apply to Scotland in the same sense as it applies to England? If it will

[LORD HOLMES OF RICHMOND]

not, we will have created a terrible situation where largely English pounds go to subsidise Scottish wind farms to produce inefficient energy, which largely English pounds then have to purchase back into the grid. That cannot be a sensible solution—it cannot be the way we do energy policy, going forward. I hope that the end of the subsidy will apply to Scotland as it does to England.

As we have already heard in the debate, it is extremely good news that nuclear is back, very much on the table. It is the most secure and potentially the cleanest energy source we currently have, but we need to ensure that we deliver it, not necessarily in the way that Hinkley Point was contracted for.

In conclusion, I do not see wind turbines as a non-existent, imaginary enemy, but perhaps, if not at windmills, it is absolutely timely and right that we are finally tilting at windmill subsidies.

6.29 pm

**Lord Tyler (LD):** My Lords, I am still, I confess, shaken by the news of my friend and colleague Charles Kennedy's sudden death this morning, and I apologise to your Lordships if I am rather more tongue-tied than usual. This is obviously not the right moment for a full appreciation of his role, and I certainly cannot match the very heartfelt tributes I have heard and seen from all over the world of politics. However, I was his Chief Whip in the House of Commons, and I want to put on the record my appreciation of and admiration for his political courage. It is largely forgotten that when the Iraq invasion was imminent, most people did actually believe the spin that came from No. 10, and it took real courage—real political courage—to stand against that tide. It took guts, integrity and real wisdom. A minority in both the other parties—a majority in my own, of course—voted against the illegal invasion, and those of us who followed his lead then will not forget his strength of character.

Charles Kennedy was also, of course, a passionate European and a true Liberal in defence of human rights; I suspect that we will miss both those attributes in the next few months. He was also a long-standing campaigner for fairness and equality, not least for the long-suffering and cheated electorate. At a British Election Study seminar last December, I forecast that there would be a wide discrepancy between votes cast and seats gained, and, of course, a few weeks ago there was. I also prophesied that the inhabitant of No. 10 would enter the door with less than a quarter of the eligible electorate voting for him; and so he did.

However, after a political lifetime of campaigning for fairness in votes, I am the first to recognise that new MPs are unlikely reformers as far as their own House is concerned. In recent years, Parliament has been prepared to find fairer electoral systems for everybody else—for Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, even the European Parliament—but for the House of Commons, of course, it has been a step too far. However, what about local government? That is where a real opportunity exists in the present Parliament. This is my plea for reform in this Parliament: to fulfil the gracious Speech and bring about effective democratic devolution.

In the multiparty environment of the 21st century, local government election results are quite as peculiar as those in Westminster, and sometimes worse. The good news is that at long last somebody is making a serious attempt to examine from the point of view of the voters a local government voting system that unfortunately is all too often examined only from the parties' point of view. I am greatly indebted to the studies of Dr Lewis Baston, who made a recent detailed assessment of the consequences of a fairer system in local government. Hitherto, such limited analysis of the UK system as has been undertaken has tended to concentrate on its implications for the parties, and almost exclusively for Parliament. However, Dr Baston's analysis is based on more robust evidence: the results of two rounds of single transferable vote elections in the Scottish local government elections of 2007 and 2012, following the reform introduced in Scotland by the Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition.

Until 2007, Scotland was in one respect not much different from the English counties: of those who voted for council candidates, barely half had the satisfaction of electing their choice. The average, on low turnouts, ranged from 40% to 55%. However, with the introduction of STV, three in four voters now get what they vote for. If you add in those whose second or subsequent preferences are effective, the "satisfied" figure can rise to 90%—perhaps double the proportion south of the border. Dr Baston terms these voters who get what they vote for "happy voters", and I think it is time we spread that experience to other parts of our allegedly united Kingdom.

The core of Dr Baston's case for reform is not the benefits or otherwise to any one party but the benefits to voters. Parties may be obsessed with gaining and maintaining control of councils, and the media certainly find it easier to interpret trends by reference to changes of control, but the consumer of the local democratic process is surely more interested in the connection between the way in which he or she votes and the representative outcome, and the resulting quality of service and accountability of those representatives. Surely England and Wales could, and should, now follow Scotland's lead and introduce this modest, rational reform to the current local government system.

The narrow choice offered by first past the post discourages any attempt to distinguish the relative merits of candidates of the same party, and makes impossible an informed choice between those of different parties, and of independents, on a preferential basis. Candidates regularly complain about the lack of public interest in the individual personalities, their achievements and special qualifications, especially when local contests are submerged in a national campaign, as they were this year. They would therefore surely be delighted with a new system that encourages more discernment.

Those of us who knocked on doors during the recent election campaign will have come up against the old refrain, "They're all the same". That is unfair in general, but at local council level in some areas it carries real credibility. After all, if you live in a city, town or county where one party has continually dominated—not just in "control" but monopolising the whole gamut of council decision-making virtually unchallenged—they may indeed be truly "all the same".



The experience in Scotland shows that the weakening of one-party hegemony has been wholly positive in reviving local democracy, and indeed has even given new life to local parties. In England, some of the spectacular failures in local authorities have coincided with long periods of one-party domination; that is surely not a coincidence. Long-sighted and wise parliamentarians—from Lord Hailsham to Robin Cook—have warned against “elective dictatorship”. I hope the Government will have that in mind when they think about persisting in pushing for further elected mayors.

Persistent monopoly council control by one party over many years, often with a minority of the total vote, is a recipe for inefficiency, partisan patronage and minor corruption, just as it would be in Westminster. The best way to avoid that is to introduce a fair local government electoral system, meaning many more “happy voters” and better, more efficient services.

I am convinced that Charles Kennedy would be delighted if, in this respect again, England and Wales followed Scotland's example.

6.36 pm

**Lord Mackenzie of Framwellgate (Non-Affl):** My Lords, I rise to speak on the provisions of the gracious Speech relating to home affairs. I welcome new legislation to modernise the law on communications data. We live in a global digital age, and many criminal acts of both serious organised crime and terrorism are prepared, planned and executed by using social media and information technology that was unheard of a few years ago. In extreme cases, in the public interest and to protect the values we cherish, it has always been possible, in certain circumstances and with proper oversight, to read someone's letter or to intercept their telephone conversation. The difficulty is that modern encryption methods are now so sophisticated that such data are difficult to decipher, and I welcome steps to ensure that they can be understood where doing so is necessary to prevent serious crime or to protect the public. Surely we cannot allow people conspiring to commit mass murder to hide behind encryption, any more than we would prevent the SAS storming a foreign embassy harbouring terrorists who are holding hostages. In times of crisis, when national security is at risk, privacy should take second place to the national interest.

It is also necessary to ensure that communications companies retain data records long enough for the police and security services to discover within a reasonable time who was contacting whom, at what location and at what time. Those are critical tools in a modern democracy and a very dangerous world. As always, of course, there must be a sensible balance between such powers and the right to privacy and liberty, and I have little doubt that this House will play its part in ensuring a proper balance in the public interest. I do not believe it does credit to dub these measures a “snoopers' charter”, as some describe them. Such reasonable measures are no more than putting necessary investigatory powers in a modern setting for the purpose of disrupting terrorist plots, criminal networks and organised child grooming.

I was interested to read last week that the number of people falling victim to identity theft has risen by almost a third in 12 months. Identity theft allows

fraudsters to open bank accounts, obtain credit cards and commit fraud in other people's names. This amounted to more than 32,000 victims in the first three months of 2015.

Of course, there is a measure which would have helped to stem this attack by professional criminals on hard-working families and that is the introduction of a biometric identity card, which, because of the use of unique foolproof identifiers, would make such crimes that much more difficult to commit. Clearly the chances of this type of fraud have now substantially increased, and that illustrates the need to use modern technology, as we have with DNA, to combat such escalating crime.

Another measure mentioned in the gracious Speech is the proposal to introduce a blanket ban on the new generation of psychoactive drugs. As the former head of the drug squad in my old force in Durham, I have seen young lives destroyed by drugs and I welcome these proposed measures. Those manufacturing and dealing in such destructive substances have been ingenious in always being ahead of the law enforcement agencies by changing very slightly the chemical make-up of these so-called “legal high” substances. It is right that such dealers in death should be visited with substantial sentences of up to seven years in prison.

In conclusion, I want to say a word about the police and the victims of crime. I still believe that we have the most respected police service in the world but, having lost more than 17,000 officers since the recession of 2008, the police representative bodies and some chief officers have understandably warned about the dire consequences of even more cuts to budgets. The Home Secretary recently warned the Police Federation to stop crying wolf, praying in aid the continued fall in reported crime, which incidentally has happened across many countries throughout Europe.

What has to be remembered is that investigating recordable crime represents only about a third of what the police do. As a service of first response, they spend much more of their time assisting the public in other ways: dealing with domestic disputes; handling drunken disorder on the streets; responding to accidents on the roads, in factories and in the home; dealing with fly tipping and litter; dealing with cycling on footpaths and jumping red lights; handling child abuse, people trafficking and drugs; and of course providing an essential reassuring presence in neighbourhoods, which is so important. If police numbers are reduced too far, these are the areas where it is increasingly felt.

Since I was a ground police officer, the number of beat bobbies has reduced dramatically. Why is that? As noble Lords know, we now have cybercrime units, internet child exploitation teams, victim support units and family liaison officers. There has also been an explosion in the number of reported sexual crimes following Savile. All crimes require witnesses to give evidence. The most important witness in any crime, provided they are still alive, is the victim, and I note that one of the measures announced in the gracious Speech is to increase the rights of victims of crime, which I applaud.

Finally, all these matters require men and women to respond in a timely manner, so, at the risk of being accused of crying wolf, I ask the Minister to take the

[LORD MACKENZIE OF FRAMWELLGATE]  
message back to the Government that even the apparently omnipotent police service has its limits and they should not stretch the thin blue line to breaking point.

6.43 pm

**Lord Plumb (Con):** My Lords, we have heard very fine speeches so far. I realise that we are only half way through, so I shall try to be brief. Hearing the valedictory speech from my noble friend Lord Eden reminds me that the time is coming for many of us to follow suit. However, we are not ready yet and are still involved, particularly in agriculture.

I speak as a farmer, as a past president of the National Farmers' Union, as a former chairman of an international policy council based in Washington and as a past chairman of the agricultural committee of the European Parliament. Therefore, I have a bit of experience of these things and my brief today is to speak about the remarkable technological and scientific changes in agriculture over the years.

Those changes have taken place through both publicly and privately funded research. Growth, as we can all understand, is entirely dependent on the results of applied research, and I hope that the Minister will agree that more research is imperative to be competitive in a freer market. Farmers and growers are free to take advantage of scientific development. If they are allowed to do so, that will make an enormous difference.

There are four points on which I wish to speak. The first is CAP reform and the second is competition. I also want to say a word or two on energy in the context of agriculture, and then to talk about an important part of the whole of British agriculture—education and training.

There are many questions about future policy—questions that proponents of leaving the European Union have to answer, such as on access to Europe's single market, where 75% of our exports go. Would we have access to immigrant labour? At this time of year, it is essential, particularly in the fruit industry. There is also a question about the future of payments and the effect on consumers. There are many things to debate but they are for future discussion.

I want to say a word about the common agricultural policy. The present policy, which should have been simplified last year, has in my view created more complications for farmers than they have experienced since 1973, and I have been involved in nearly all the negotiations that have taken place over the years. I may be exaggerating if I say that there are probably consultants advising farmers at the moment on dealing with the rural payment scheme, particularly in relation to environmental issues. Many, of course, are racing to complete within the next two weeks.

I welcome the Prime Minister's plans to renegotiate our relationship with the European Union. It provides us, I believe, with the opportunity to simplify the common agricultural policy. There has been a failure to issue guidance on present policy in a timely manner. It is an application that has, in my opinion, proven not to be fit for purpose in England. As well as failing to communicate the impact of non-compliance, the policy has left many farmers with a very difficult predicament.

It therefore has to increase market orientation and competitiveness in a large global market. I fear that we are involved in yet a further example of gold-plating policy. I do not wish to decry Defra, which has been extremely helpful, but Defra itself often finds aspects of policy difficult to explain to farmers.

On competition, the enterprise Bill could bring significant changes and benefits to agriculture. Following the Macdonald report, I recognise that progress has been made on reducing red tape but I am sure that the Minister will accept that there is still some way to go. He may like to comment.

The proposed single inspection scheme should reduce the regulatory burden on farmers without compromising standards. Inspection criteria have to be consistent across the country and throughout the European Union, which requires inspectors to have a good knowledge of the business, wherever it is.

Deflation is causing real problems, with food prices falling—down 3% in the first half of this year. Nowhere is the pressure more obvious than in the dairy sector. Many—up to three a week—are leaving the dairy industry and this is on top of the pressure caused by TB eradication, with more than 250,000 cattle culled in Great Britain since 2008. I remember when, in 1964, we had the privilege of announcing that we had totally eradicated bovine tuberculosis.

Climate change, of course, will mean the need for a growth in production for the home market and exports and the need to provide raw materials from agriculture for the largest manufacturers in this country, with its ever-growing population.

Finally, on energy, I support exactly what the noble Viscount, Lord Ridley, said. The Government have the right to focus on security, but this has to come from diverse sources of energy. Land-based renewables, solar energy, wind energy and biofuels all have a key role to play in the mix. This is an important diversification, helping to protect profitable farming and first-cut grass. I have been around a bit. I have seen grass fields already mown for, I believed, the cut to be put into silage. But in fact it is not. A lot of it goes straight into a digester instead of into the cow. That, in itself, tells the story of farming changes.

In education, do we have young people coming into agriculture and with rural interests? Yes, we do. A focus on skills and job creation is vital as agriculture continues to develop as a high-tech industry. The gracious Speech specifically mentioned the duty of Ministers to report annually on job creation and apprenticeships. The good work started under the agri-tech strategy should ensure that the industry has the skills to develop further. Our universities, colleges, management courses and apprenticeship schemes do a great job. Quite often, I have the privilege of interviewing young people. They are full of enthusiasm to work in agriculture, horticulture or on some rural development. They have the ability to take the industry forward in a competitive spirit and a will to preserve our rural environment.

I have a dream, occasionally, that I am still a young farmer, enjoying the facilities for training through leadership courses and universities. I wake up believing that there will be a great future, if young people are given the freedom to work in the rural environment. We must give all our encouragement to it.

6.52 pm

**Baroness Warwick of Undercliffe (Lab):** My Lords, I want to say a few words about higher education and then comment on housing.

The key political announcement in Her Majesty's Speech was the Bill for a referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union. The benefits to our society and our economy of remaining in the EU are clear in an area in which I have a particular interest—that of higher education. I declare an interest as a council member of both Nottingham Trent University and University College London.

Universities receive £790 million in research funding from EU sources, which is 16% of total research funding. The UK's membership of the EU helps to ensure common standards and processes, which help to facilitate UK strength in international collaboration.

On any measure, universities are highly internationalised communities, in terms of both staff and students. Yet it looks like we will return to the tussles of the last Parliament between the university sector and the Home Office over the visa regime for students. Will the Minister tell the House whether the retitled “net migration aim” can be achieved without severely restricting the number of students and highly skilled migrants who can come to the UK?

I have one further point about HE, on stability and funding. Last Friday, I had the hugely rewarding experience of visiting the University of Bradford and its Integrated Life Sciences Learning Centre, a unique cross-disciplinary combination of advanced patient simulation, virtual anatomy and diagnostic-grade digital pathology, introducing students to technologies that will be the mainstay of laboratory-based medicine in the NHS of the future. With the support of local industrial partners, the university is linking the centre to business incubation of companies involved in digital health. Truly ground-breaking and yet eminently applicable, this is the technology that the NHS and the country need.

The Conservative manifesto stressed stability for higher education funding. I echo the words of the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Leeds, in his admirable maiden speech yesterday, about the importance of encompassing cities such as Bradford in the northern powerhouse concept. Will the Minister assure us that innovative work such as that at Bradford, and of course elsewhere, will be properly supported?

I now turn to the housing Bill, and declare an interest. In September, I will take up the position of chair of the National Housing Federation, the membership body for over 1,000 housing associations operating in England. I will also take this opportunity to congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Kerslake, on a very impressive maiden speech. I am looking forward very much to working with him.

The housing Bill announced a number of measures intended to help increase the supply of homes that this country desperately needs. We need 245,000 homes a year in England just to keep pace with demand, 80,000 of which should be affordable homes. At the moment, we are building only half that number. We have a crisis in housing and we need to acknowledge it. I am glad that the Government accept this.

One of the Bill's measures extends the right to buy to all housing association tenants. Introducing greater levels of home ownership is a laudable ambition, yet I fear that this measure could significantly undermine efforts to end the housing crisis. Can I give the House a sense of what might be put at risk if this policy is pursued in its current form?

Housing associations make a massive economic and social contribution, both nationally and locally. The long-standing partnership between government and housing associations is one of the most successful public/private enterprise models in the country. Collectively, associations own and manage over 2.5 million homes across every region, housing over 5 million people. These are homes for people paying social and affordable rents; homes that people can rent privately; homes that support people with disabilities and care needs to live independently; homes that are refuges for homeless people; and homes for people to own.

Housing associations build around 45,000 homes a year and have the ambition to do so much more. Last year, the National Housing Federation published *An Ambition to Deliver*, a 20-year vision for the sector to build 120,000 homes each year across every part of the market. Given that current trends suggest that private builders will build only 130,000 homes for sale each year, this effort from housing associations will be essential if the housing crisis is to be resolved.

So much more is at stake if housing associations are prevented from fulfilling their mission. It is not just homes that housing associations provide. They deliver vital services to their tenants and the wider communities. Every £1 that the Government invest in the sector is matched with £6 from housing associations. Housing associations are at the heart of every community in which they work. They get people into work, and help them to manage their money better. Their initiatives help people to have healthier lifestyles. They support older people to remain in their homes and they tackle anti-social behaviour. They employ 146,000 people and provide over 12,000 apprenticeships across the country.

Like the Government, housing associations want to help people to buy their own home. For example, over the last 10 years, housing associations have sold over 82,000 shared-ownership homes and there are now in excess of 250,000 shared ownership homes in England's housing market. I am concerned that the proposals to extend the right to buy will significantly reduce the number of affordable homes, certainly in the short term, when there are already nearly 2 million people on the housing waiting list. The Government hope to replace homes sold through this new scheme on a one-for-one basis, but experience has shown, and others have amply demonstrated, that it is extremely challenging in practice to replace existing homes.

The Bill will almost certainly make it more difficult for housing associations to raise finance for the 80,000 home development programmes that we need every year to keep up with demand. Perhaps most significantly, it would effectively mean that associations are no longer in control of their own assets. Critically, housing associations are independent organisations, not public bodies. As private businesses and charities, they enter into a contract to deliver products and services. Forcing

[BARONESS WARWICK OF UNDERCLIFFE]

housing associations to sell off their properties could set an extremely dangerous precedent for government interference in independent business. Preserving charity assets is a principle that has been in place since Elizabeth I, and the Government really need to exercise caution in undermining it. It is difficult to understand how a Conservative Government could support a policy that essentially places the Government in a role that should be the preserve of independent boards.

Housing associations are eager to help the Government meet their housing ambitions, build more homes and support many more people into home ownership. This Bill could dramatically impede their ability to do so. The Government are yet to set out a clear timetable for delivering the housing Bill. Therefore, in conclusion, I urge the Minister to commit to a full and thorough period of consultation before publishing legislation to extend the right to buy to housing association tenants. I look forward to the Minister's response to the passionate, powerful and forensic analysis of my noble friend Lady Hollis.

7 pm

**Baroness Harris of Richmond (LD):** My Lords, I remind your Lordships of my registered interests and, in particular, that I now chair the independent reference group for the Police Federation of England and Wales.

During the last general election, for the first time that I can remember, law and order was hardly on the agenda of the political parties. Indeed, this is the first time I can remember in the 16 years I have been in this House when the gracious Speech has not referred to specific policing changes in a police Bill, although the noble Baroness, Lady Williams of Trafford, has spelt out some of the measures. So I felt it important to mention policing in general terms, and the Police Federation in particular, to ensure that this vital service is clearly recognised as crucial to how our country is governed.

Since 2010 the police service has lost 17,000 officers and 17,000 police staff. That is equivalent to nine entire police forces, or every single police officer in the south-east from Cornwall to Kent. Despite this, we are told that crime is down and more cuts to policing are envisaged. However pleased we should all be about the reduction in crime, it tells only part of the story. Child sexual exploitation is up; counterterrorism incidents are up; the management of sex offenders in the community is up; dealing with people with mental health issues is up; being used as the service of last resort, especially police cells having to be used as places of safety, is up; sickness levels are up; the number of officers owed days off in lieu is massively up; and incidences of violent crime, especially violence directed at police officers, are also up. I could go on.

It is therefore not quite the rosy picture painted for us by the Home Office. "Cuts have consequences" was the mantra at the recent Police Federation Conference, but that was roundly rejected by the Home Secretary, who accused the federation of "crying wolf". But you simply cannot continue cutting a service that delivers 24/7, 365 days a year to our citizens without reducing its efficiency in so many ways. Neighbourhood policing will disappear as officers are pulled away to attend to

serious crime incidents, and cuts in other community services, such as reducing lighting at night and the closure of youth centres, will only exacerbate the pressures on the police—who so often have to pick up where other services fail to deliver.

I have been involved in policing for almost 40 years and I truly do not believe that I have ever known morale in the service to be lower than it is at present. Police officers want to do a good job. They want to protect communities and ensure good order. But because their numbers are now at a critical tipping point, they fear that they will not be able to fulfil their roles for much longer.

I should say a word about the Police Federation as a whole. The organisation is undergoing massive restructuring and is in the process of implementing in full the recommendations of the independent review by Sir David Normington which the federation itself requested even before the Home Secretary berated it so fiercely last year. I want to tell your Lordships that an enormous amount of work is going on at federation headquarters, but it will take time to turn round an organisation that was more or less unchanged in its structure for almost 100 years. I therefore give the Government notice that I will be putting down a prayer to seek to overturn Statutory Instrument 2015 No. 630, which was made on 9 March this year and came into force on 2 April. I will use that debate to explain just why I feel so angry that there is an intention to interfere with internal federation matters which should not be subject to an order by the Home Secretary.

I understand but profoundly disagree with the Government's eagerness to curtail the so-called powers of unions. However, police officers are subjected to a great many more strictures in their working lives and strictures on their industrial rights. To deprive the Police Federation of its funding by suggesting that officers do not need to be members of the organisation, but that the federation must represent them if an officer requests it, without having paid anything into the federation coffers, is utter madness. How can the Police Federation possibly function on that sort of calculation? Perhaps I am being naive. Perhaps that is just what the Government want: to take away the federation's power of representation of its members and, hey presto, the police are fragmented into regions and branches. No, it is vital that the police have a strong and well-run organisation to represent them. I and my colleagues will do what we can to help them reform and renew so that they can again be represented with integrity and transparency.

7.06 pm

**Baroness Howe of Idlicote (CB):** My Lords, I want to begin by talking about the implementation of regulations sanctioned by the Modern Slavery Act. I look forward to the conclusion and evaluation of the child trafficking advocate trials and hope that the resolution from the Secretary of State, and regulations to roll out that scheme across the whole of England and Wales, will follow shortly thereafter. I am sure that the Minister would expect nothing less, but I reassure him that I and many other noble Lords will look in

detail at the expected regulations to ensure that the independent child trafficking advocates have all the necessary authority, functions and training to meet the needs of those extremely vulnerable children and be in accordance with international best practice guidance.

I also look forward to the completion of the pilots of the revised national referral mechanism. As I stated during our debates on the then Modern Slavery Bill, I am concerned at the vagueness of references to identifying and supporting victims in that legislation and hope that it can swiftly be remedied with the introduction of regulations and publication of statutory guidance. As I made clear during the debate, I believe that the provision of regulations, and therein a statutory basis for this support which has been provided in Northern Ireland and will soon be in place in Scotland, is most significant. I encourage the Government to use powers in the Modern Slavery Act to introduce regulations on this matter as a priority. I understand that the Government wish to take account of the pilot projects in moving forward in this area but I hope there will not be a lengthy delay. Perhaps the Minister can provide further details on the timetable for completion of the pilots and when we might expect to see draft guidance or regulations regarding identifying and supporting victims.

For my second subject, it will not surprise your Lordships to learn that I want to turn to the important issue of online safety. I welcome and applaud the fact that the Government have negotiated a voluntary approach to default-on adult content filters with the four big internet service providers. This constitutes an important step forward, and I pay tribute particularly to the work of the Prime Minister, whose personal leadership on this issue has been, and continues to be, of great importance. There is, however, a great deal more to be done to make sure that the default-on filtering framework works properly.

As I explained during a debate last November, there are two significant problems, in that the voluntary approach to default-on covers only 90% of the market, leaving thousands of children beyond its protection. Nor, crucially, does it age-verify those seeking to lift the filters before allowing them to opt in to access adult content.

In raising this subject today, I want to look at age verification in relation to specific websites rather than filters, and I welcome the Conservative general election manifesto commitment in this regard. Rather than making an age-verification commitment in relation to filtering, page 37 of the manifesto made a commitment to require websites providing pornographic material to put in place robust age-verification procedures in order to protect children from accidentally or deliberately accessing these pages. This commitment provides a direct parallel to the commitment to website age verification mandated by the Gambling Act 2005. Since that Act required online gambling sites to provide robust age verification before permitting people to gamble on line, the children's charities have not been made aware of any children with online problem gambling difficulties.

At a time when we are presented with increasing evidence of children and young people developing pornography addiction, and when it has become apparent

in court that a number of boys charged with sexually assaulting young girls had been acting out hardcore pornography which they had accessed from computers in their bedrooms, the Conservative commitment is very timely. We already have legislation requiring that sites based in the UK that specifically live-stream R18 video-on-demand material have robust age verification. This was introduced courtesy of the Audiovisual Media Services Regulations 2010 and 2014, which implemented the audiovisual media services directive 2007. Happily, the 2015 manifesto commitment is more wide-ranging, applying to pornography generally rather than just to R18 video-on-demand material. That is very welcome indeed.

However, the experience of the Audiovisual Media Services Regulations prompts important implementation questions for the Government. The amount of hardcore video on demand that comes from websites based abroad is huge. Experian Hitwise statistics for UK visits to just six "tube" sites are staggering. PornHub gets 66 million monthly UK hits; xHamster, 63 million; XNXX, 29 million; RedTube, 28 million; Xvideos, 28 million; and YouPorn, 26 million. That is a total of 240 million hits from the UK in a single month to adult sites without any form of onsite child protection. Given the scale of the hardcore pornography problem in the UK that comes from beyond the UK, it is very clear that we will not find a credible means of protecting children unless we find a way of regulating porn from foreign as well as UK sites.

Two points follow from this. First, given that some of these sites are based in EU jurisdictions that are also subject to the Audiovisual Media Services Directive 2007, have the Government considered whether the Commission is adequately assessing the implementation of the directive in other jurisdictions? We need an answer to that important question. Secondly, and more importantly, however, it is vital to recognise that, given that some of these sites are definitely based beyond the EU, pressing for proper implementation of EU legislation does not provide us with a real solution to the problem.

What, then, is the solution? We will have to wait to debate my new online safety Bill on another occasion, but it does propose an answer to the all-important question of how to regulate sites based outside the UK projecting pornography into this country. It draws on the model for regulating online gambling sites that are based beyond the UK which the Government have developed through their Gambling (Licensing and Advertising) Act. I ask the Minister: through which legislation do the Government plan to introduce their welcome age-verification manifesto commitment; and, crucially, given the scale of the problem, how will they apply this commitment to sites beyond the UK that are accessed in the UK? In this respect, I hope the Government will find the model in my Bill useful.

7.15 pm

**Lord Crickhowell (Con):** My Lords, on energy security, there was an odd juxtaposition in the gracious Speech which said:

"Measures will be introduced to secure energy security and to control immigration".

I wish I was more confident that the Government will achieve either objective.

[LORD CRICKHOWELL]

The new Secretary of State will need great skills if she is to extract her department's policies from the quagmire that has embraced them for far too long. My initial optimism was shaken by reading her blog which appeared on the day of the State Opening. It contained the controversial assertion that the UK,

"is one of the most energy secure countries in the world".

She argued that healthy margins had been achieved last winter; that the capacity market would ensure that future peak electricity demand would be met; and that,

"we are investing in new Energy infrastructure, new nuclear and renewables, as well as exploring from shale gas".

A blunt statement of reality would have provided a sounder foundation for the actions that are now needed. The report of the Science and Technology Committee, which was referred to by my noble friend Lord Ridley, on the resilience of the electricity system tells us that around one-fifth of the generation capacity available in 2011 is expected to close by 2020. The report comments:

"Closure of old power stations, combined with insufficient investment in new electricity generation capacity, has resulted in the capacity margin being squeezed ... By October 2014, following a series of power station outages, National Grid reported that the capacity margin for winter 2014/15 would fall to 4.1%".

It is true that by putting in place short-term measures the capacity margin has been increased. However, the cost and sustainability of those short-term measures is a factor that has to be considered.

The Government are relying on two mechanisms created by the Energy Act 2013: contracts for difference and the capacity market. Contracts for difference are designed to stimulate investment in renewables, carbon capture and storage, and nuclear. The capacity market is designed to offer all providers a steady, predictable revenue stream, in return for which they must produce energy when needed or face penalties. I shall say something later about the problems that are already apparent.

On page 16 of the immensely authoritative report by the House's Economic Affairs Committee, *The Economic Impact on UK Energy Policy of Shale Gas and Oil*, in evidence Professor Helm said that,

"by 2015 or 2016, the capacity margin in this country will be very close to zero; in fact, I have done some numbers which suggests that it might be below zero. What is going to fill the gap"?

The committee concluded:

"There is a growing risk of power cuts in the UK as the margin of electricity generating capacity over peak demand shrinks".

My noble friend Lord Ridley told us about the recently announced closures of coal-fired generating capacity. In just three years our total coal-fired capacity will have fallen from 24 gigawatts to 15 gigawatts. Like Professor Helm, I ask what is going to fill the gap. I wish it was nuclear. In 2011, when I was a member of the Science and Technology Committee, we produced a report on nuclear research and development capabilities and said:

"Some experts suggest that 12 GW of energy generation is the minimum contribution that nuclear could make ... up to 2050. However, the weight of evidence indicates that significantly higher contribution ... is likely to be required".

In 2013 the Government published their *Long-term Nuclear Energy Strategy*, stating:

"The Government believes that nuclear energy has an important role to play in delivering our long term objective of a secure, low carbon, affordable, energy future".

But here we are in mid-2015 with little prospect of new nuclear stations making a contribution until well after 2020. The coalition Government tried to negotiate a deal with EDF and its partners to build a new station at Hinkley Point. My noble friend Lord Ridley suggested that it was a disastrous selection of the wrong company with the wrong technology. On the original timetable, we would be expecting completion in a couple of years. As it is, no deal has been signed and every so-called deadline has been passed. It seems that private investors are unwilling to take on the risks, even with the guarantees offered by CFDs.

If we are to get a nuclear programme under way, it may be that the Government have to be a major player, as other countries have found, and as was the case with Britain's original and successful nuclear programme. Ministers talk about the importance of infrastructure investment. Is there any infrastructure investment more important than that which will secure long-term energy security, and is there any action likely to be more effective in meeting the fears and objectives of the noble Lord, Lord Layard, than an effective nuclear programme? These are issues about which Ministers should be thinking pretty hard.

I pose another question. Energy and climate change policies are funded through levies on consumer bills. Some of those levies are managed under the levy control framework and a cap which DECC has agreed with the Treasury. It will rise to £7.6 billion in 2020-21. Analysts suggest that DECC has significantly underestimated the cost of the existing policies. If these analyses are right, DECC may have fully committed the budget available under the levy control framework right out to 2020, leaving nothing available for anything else. The Secretary of State will need to take urgent steps to address this situation and to change some of those policies along the lines suggested by my noble friend Lord Wakeham.

The Economic Affairs Committee has pointed out that substantial volumes of gas will still be needed over several decades for home heating and as a back-up supply for the power sector when supplies from renewable sources such as wind and solar are inevitably intermittent. Even if gas-fired power generation is replaced over time by renewables and nuclear, and that may be a very long time,

"gas is likely to remain the main source of heat in the UK's economy".

That is why shale gas is so important.

The new energy Bill announced in the gracious Speech may give a boost to the UK oil and gas offshore industry, but it will be introduced against a background of declining North Sea oil and gas output, down by almost 40% since 2010. As the Economic Affairs Committee observed, the industry response remains uncertain. It also concluded that the development of shale gas in the UK on a significant scale would provide substantial benefits. The depressing thing is that once again we seem to be firmly stuck in a quagmire. There

is a great deal of talk and not much effective action. The Economic Affairs Committee concluded that the regulatory framework was dauntingly complex:

“Unless the Government act to streamline the system so that regulation is effective as well as rigorous, the UK will be unable to take full advantage of the economic opportunities offered by shale gas ... The Government must take decisive measures to quicken the pace of exploration and development of the UK's shale gas resource”.

It listed the measures that are needed. I have seen little evidence so far that decisive measures have been taken. We will want to know very early in this Parliament that they are now being taken. If we do not see drilling starting in the near future, it will be unforgiveable, and I fear that the nation will pay a heavy price.

Finally, I trust that the welcome proposals on wind farms will be discussed fully with the Welsh Assembly so that large wind farms are not just pushed into the beautiful parts of Wales. Welsh people will want locally taken decisions just as much as the English.

7.24 pm

**Lord Curry of Kirkharle (CB):** My Lords, like the noble Lord, Lord Plumb, my comments principally concern agriculture and its potential to contribute to the economic stability and growth referred to in Her Majesty's humble Address. I declare an interest as a farmer in Northumberland, and my other interests are listed in my declaration.

It is a matter of deep concern that the farming and food sector has huge potential to contribute to economic recovery and be a significant driver in building on the economic growth that we have seen to date, but the potential is not being realised for a number of reasons. The first is that almost all commodity prices are extremely depressed at the present time, and unless circumstances change the farming sector will experience another very difficult year financially.

Prices are depressed for a number of reasons. The absence of extreme weather events globally has led to increased production, and as a consequence prices are lower. The strength of sterling has also impacted on our domestic market prices, and continuing price wars by retailers trying to price match the discounters is devaluing the price of food. Margins right across the food chain are being eroded and farmers sit where the buck stops. It is not a happy picture.

Food price deflation is a major contributor to the current consumer prices index, and milk is a great example of a product being sold way below the cost of production. In the short term this may be good news for consumers, but the longer this continues the more that confidence is eroded within the farming community and long-term investment decisions are being questioned. I was, however, delighted that the Government announced in the last Budget that farmers would benefit from five-year tax averaging. This is very welcome.

Secondly, as the noble Lord, Lord Plumb, has mentioned, at present farmers are totally preoccupied with filling in the BPS application forms. This is a time-consuming, bureaucratic nightmare. As chair of the Better Regulation Executive, I was very impressed with the performance of Defra as a department in reducing regulatory burdens last year and delivering on the one-in, two-out policy during the last Parliament.

I complimented the Permanent Secretary on doing so well, but we now risk going into reverse, and there is a fear that through the manual labour required to process these forms by the Rural Payments Agency due to the failure of IT systems to be fit for purpose, payments later this year might be delayed, which in the light of the price pressures I mentioned earlier could have devastating consequences for farmers' cash flow. This is contributing to the current uncertainty.

Finally, we are suffering from a lack of investment in scientific research and skills both by government and the sector over the past 25 years or so. The noble Lord, Lord Plumb, also mentioned this. Our productivity and therefore our competitiveness has fallen, and this is not good news. Poorly thought through decisions taken during the 1990s to cut back on investment in science are having an impact today. Yields have plateaued and our productivity has fallen. We used to lead the world, and we need to regain that position. Thankfully, the coalition Government recognised the urgency of this and committed additional funding through the agri-tech strategy, which is hugely welcome.

It is now essential that these funds are targeted to deliver long-term improvements, and it is encouraging that the farming and food industry, through its various bodies and institutions, is becoming engaged in the process. I am involved in a number of these, which include those who see the need to professionalise our sector through skills development, the recognition of qualifications and the promotion of agriculture and its extended sectors as an exciting career opportunity. The noble Baroness, Lady Byford, and I are patrons of Landex, the land-based college sector organisation. Student numbers studying agriculture have doubled over the past five years, so interest is definitely growing.

Agriculture is a long-term business. Short-term pragmatic decisions can have long-term consequences. I am delighted that, as I understand it, Defra has decided to take a long-term strategic look at what needs to be done with regard to policy development. As has already been mentioned in this debate, this is now long overdue. If it is true, it is welcome. As some Peers are aware, I was involved in the last strategic review in 2002. If we are to stem the decline in self-sufficiency in food production, now at around 60% and dropping every year, action has to be taken. Global trading conditions are important to this, and the current EU-US TTIP negotiations are one example of making sure that British food production is given the opportunity to compete. Too often our competitive position is undermined by imported product that is not subject to the same legislative standards and costs but has free access to our markets. Of course I support the freeing up of international trade, but resolving non-trade issues that undermine our competitiveness is crucial to our success.

I should like to refer to one other issue that is an important element of Her Majesty's gracious Speech. The Government are planning to devolve more powers to cities and city regions. I have to confess that I have failed to define what a city region is and where it starts and ends. I know that if you live in Upper Coquetdale, where I was born, you feel a very long way from a city region. Even a northern powerhouse looks a distance from Coquetdale.

[LORD CURRY OF KIRKHARLE]

It is vital that rural areas of Britain are not neglected in the Government's determination to focus on cities. The absence of any formal rural proofing of this element of government policy is a real concern. The potential for rural areas to contribute to economic growth is huge and in many areas untapped. I asked for confirmation previously in your Lordships' House that the LEPS—the local enterprise partnerships—are monitored on their inclusion of rural areas in their economic strategic plans. We need inclusive plans that encourage and promote opportunities for an expansion of the so-called rural economy.

An issue about which I have become increasingly concerned is the silo approach by government agencies, NGOs, local authorities and even government departments in the development of strategy and the delivery of their responsibilities. If the remote areas of Britain, with their patchwork of family farms and fragile village communities living in the main in river catchments, are to be saved from extinction, all these bodies need to work together. That includes the local authorities, the Environment Agency, Natural England, national parks, the Forestry Commission and the LEPS, to mention a few; I could go on. These upper-river catchment areas throughout Britain need one sustainable joint plan that addresses the specific issues that are relevant to each of these vulnerable communities, so that important skills are retained, schools and services are maintained, and employment increased because access to high-speed broadband is a given. We are not maximising the benefits of the current public spend by the fragmented nature of public-policy delivery.

I do hope that these issues will be addressed by the Minister.

7.32 pm

**Baroness Fookes (Con):** My Lords, I start with a sentence almost at the end of the gracious Speech, which states:

“Other measures will be laid before you”.

That wonderful catch-all phrase is beloved of Governments of every hue. I say to my noble friend the Minister that I hope that the Government will not be tempted down that road because it seems to me that the legislation outlined in the gracious Speech is already very heavy and, if all the measures are to be considered thoroughly, carefully and without making mistakes, that will be quite sufficient for this session. I have noticed in the past that where mistakes occur it is partly because legislation has been hurried or too much has had to be got in in too short a time. What happens is that in the next Session or the one after that, there has to be another Bill in order to put it right. I make that observation to my noble friend.

Sometimes, only half in jest, I say that if I had a vote, I would vote for a party which says firmly, “We will pass no new legislation for five years. We will get rid of outdated and useless legislation, as on a bonfire. We will consolidate the good that remains into reasonably sized Bills dealing with one main topic”. That brings me to another of my beefs; that is, the habit of Governments of all complexions to put disparate subjects into one almighty Bill. I suppose one could call it a

portmanteau Bill, although, more down to earth, I prefer to call it a dog's breakfast. I encourage my noble friend not to go down that route either in so far as it lies in his power.

Another temptation for Governments is to seek to legislate the moment a scandal arises. The cry goes up, “We must have a Bill. We must have legislation”. I urge the Government always to look to see what is already available on the statute book before going down that road. I give a little example from the Communications Committee, on which I served in the last Parliament. Noble Lords will recall that there have been some very unpleasant incidents on social media. There have been horrible expressions of hatred against others, on which I will not dwell, and even the sending of photographs of an intimate nature, which were intended for very private circulation but which, when a partnership breaks up, are circulated widely. I think that that is called revenge porn.

The committee looked at this and spoke to a special adviser who knows a great deal about the laws relating to this issue. We found that the victims, the police and the Crown Prosecution Service already had legislation in various forms on the statute book that could deal with this. I am not of course referring to the matters raised by the noble Baroness, Lady Howe, because they are different. It is just an illustration of what can often be done with what you already have.

I turn to a part of the gracious Speech where no legislation is proposed; namely, that dealing with the environment and climate change. Other noble Lords have dealt with this at a high policy level. I will look at it in exactly the opposite direction; that is, what ordinary people can do if they are sufficiently mobilised. I am well aware that major projects to prevent flooding are beyond the reach of ordinary people. However, they can certainly do something in their own gardens in urban areas where there is a real problem with run-off because people have concreted over their front gardens to take cars. It is perfectly possible to have a car in your front garden without getting rid of the garden altogether. I do not know whether anyone saw either in person or on television an exhibit at the recent Chelsea Flower Show. A designer, who I think was an amateur, did a wonderful front garden using Welsh slate. It had little runlets of flowers on either side of and between where the wheels of the car would go. Exactly where the wheels would go had been worked out and there was earth between through which the water could drain.

The Royal Horticultural Society has been advocating something of this sort for some years now. I have been a member for more years now than I care to remember. It is doing its utmost to encourage this kind of thing. It can be done simply as well as more elaborately. It would help enormously if Ministers at Defra were to give a real boost to this suggestion.

Another issue relates to the problems faced by bees. I am not sure how many people except the agriculturalists among us know much about the severe threat to bee populations. The horror is that, if the bee population should become extinct, we would see our food crops disappear totally. It is a nightmarish scenario but I hope that it will not come to that. Certainly, we need



to be worried about it. People can help immensely in their gardens by growing the right flowers to give succour to the bees over a long period of time. They can do an awful lot in that way. I am not good on figures but I know that the number of back gardens, if not front gardens, is an enormous part of our total area. This suggestion could have a major effect but it needs the contributions of individual gardeners. Since we are a nation of garden lovers, surely we can harness that. On that point, I am aware of the time and I will sit down.

7.39 pm

**Viscount Simon (Lab):** My Lords, what a fascinating speech. The proposals put forward in the gracious Speech are an important stepping-stone towards strengthening policing in England and Wales, but some issues remain. I declare my interests, which are in the register.

The line between extremist views and freedom of speech is a difficult one, particularly for a police service whose job is to protect both freedom of speech and the public from violent extremism. The Government need to think very carefully about how the legislation in the newly proposed extremism Bill will be introduced and defined, as it is important that it is enforceable by officers on the ground. Currently, for the underfunded and understrength force, it is very unclear how this will happen.

The police service, although severely stretched, still picks up where other services cannot. Every year, under the Mental Health Act 1983, approximately 11,000 people are taken to a police station as a “place of safety”, when mental health emergencies should be handled by mental health professionals, not by police officers, who do not have the relevant training, equipment or premises. Using police officers in place of mental health professionals not only puts the people going through mental health crises at risk but puts further pressure on the struggling police service.

The Government's commitment to introduce access and waiting time standards for mental health services is a step in the right direction to provide support for the vulnerable people when they need it most. This will allow police officers to do what they are trained to do, which is to protect the public. Mental health issues must—I repeat, must—be dealt with by health agencies, not by police officers.

Roads policing is an essential part of the police service. Recent changes to legislation to introduce roadside drugs tests will help to reduce road injuries and casualties, but the effectiveness of the new sanctions greatly depends on whether forces have the capacity, funds and adequate police officer numbers to enforce them. The severe reduction of traffic officers across the country has had dramatic consequences: we are now seeing more deaths and serious injuries on the roads. The Government need to address these issues as a priority.

To achieve the financial pressures imposed by the Government, chief constables have had to look at the overall cost of running road policing units, where the cars and equipment are expensive. Reducing deaths on the roads by increasing trained traffic officers would reduce overall costs. Each road death currently costs approximately £1.75 million. It is, perhaps, worth

mentioning that the total number of traffic officers fell from 5,635 in 2010 to 4,356 in 2014, with Devon and Cornwall in those years experiencing a reduction from 239 to 57, to give just one specific example.

What could be the priorities to reduce road deaths and injuries on our roads? Graduated driving licences, telematics and young driver restrictions would be a start. What about an increase in penalty points for using a mobile phone while driving, or setting a maximum noise level in a car so that emergency vehicles can be heard? We then come to lowering the blood alcohol level for drink drivers in line with Scotland and the wider European Union.

Many years ago, I had an amendment agreed to the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act to enable drivers to be breathalysed at the roadside, with the results obtained being totally accurate. These kits are still not available and have not, I believe, been type approved. Why not, after all these years?

There is some good news for next year. A new national diagnostic IT system is being formed with the intention of reducing the demand on the police to attend some collisions, and reducing the pressure on the remaining front counters. I am only sorry that I am speaking today and not after watching the ITV television programme on Thursday entitled “Coping without Cops”.

7.45 pm

**Baroness Parminter (LD):** My Lords, it is a matter of regret that the gracious Speech is bereft of measures to protect and enhance the natural environment. I fully accept that this is not a coalition Government's programme, which would have contained such measures, but it is disappointing that the Conservative manifesto's commitments to draw up a 25-year plan to restore the UK's biodiversity and to keep the public forests and woodlands in trust for the nation are not included.

I do welcome, however, the strong line on securing a global deal on climate change. Like the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Salisbury, in his excellent maiden speech, I agree that a successful outcome to the December meeting in Paris is crucial if we are to address the risks posed by rising average global temperatures. The Government are right to prioritise that international focus, although this parliamentary year will see key national decisions, such as the fifth carbon budget, having to be agreed. Given that the Tory manifesto opposed the introduction of a power sector decarbonisation target—something supported by the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party—I look forward to lively debates over the coming months in this House.

The measure in the gracious Speech that I wish to focus on, however, is the in/out referendum on our membership of the EU. Since the 1970s, Europe has become the core framework in most areas of environmental policy. It covers issues from air to water pollution, from biodiversity conservation to marine protection, the regulation of chemicals, waste and recycling, energy conservation and climate change mitigation, environmental liability and justice. In short, it is the most developed and influential body of environmental law and policy on the global stage. The advantages of an EU-wide approach are clear.

[BARONESS PARMINTER]

Many environmental problems require concerted action because they are essentially cross-border issues, such as air pollution, migratory species or maritime management. Further, where the issues are global, such as climate change mitigation or deforestation, European nations have much greater influence and leverage when working together.

Successive British Governments have rightly taken the view that European policy is the most effective and efficient means of addressing much of the environmental and climate agenda. The UK has exerted a significant influence on the evolution of that policy in terms of the priorities set, the scientific evidence, the policy tools employed and some of the key measures adopted. The EU's adoption of a 40% cut in greenhouse gas levels by 2030, which is critical in the ongoing climate negotiations, is one example where Britain played a pivotal role.

Of course, with an increasingly diverse group of countries, decisions can be slower and compromises can be uncomfortable. Noble Lords need no further reminder from me, given the excellent reminders from the noble Lords, Lord Plumb and Lord Curry, that implementation and enforcement are constant issues. It is not a perfect Union, but these drawbacks, while they should not be glossed over, are substantially outweighed by the multiple benefits to the environment and, indeed, to the economy. At the RSPCA and the CPRE I saw the value of the birds and habitats directives in protecting nature-rich habitats and species. While a member of this House's EU Committee in its inquiry into energy policy, I heard how business values the level playing field and reasonable level of policy certainty that the stability of EU policy offers—particularly those companies and utilities investing in large projects with long payback periods, such as renewable energy plants and transmission lines. EU environmental measures have helped to stimulate innovation, for example in the car industry—as the noble Baroness, Lady Neville-Rolfe, mentioned earlier in Questions—following the introduction of binding standards on emissions.

The overall impact of EU membership in the environmental domain can be judged to be strongly positive to the UK. With the gracious Speech firing the starting gun on a race towards a possible exit from Europe, it is time now for all those who recognise its value for the environment to speak out loud and clear. It is poignant to say that on a day when we have lost a friend such as Charles Kennedy, who was such a passionate pro-European and committed environmentalist. I hope that the environment movement as a whole will join Members on all sides of this House—it is a great sadness that the noble Lord, Lord Deben, is no longer in his place—who stand up for the environment and are prepared to make the case for Britain to stay in Europe.

7.50 pm

**Lord Pearson of Rannoch (UKIP):** My Lords, I propose to speak about Islam and its future in this country. Indeed, I hope that everyone—Muslims and the rest of us—can start talking about Islam without

being told that we are Islamophobes stirring up religious hatred. I should make it clear that I am not speaking for UKIP and that I am by no means a Muslim scholar. However, I am advised by three such scholars, one of whom was a sharia court judge for 11 years.

Islam is a vast subject and so, given our time constraint, I refer noble Lords to a debate I had in Grand Committee on 19 November 2013. What I said then has been justified by subsequent events in north Africa and elsewhere, and a few respectable commentators are beginning to suggest that we should be allowed to debate openly the nature of Islam and its likely effect on our future society. For instance, Professor Tom Holland suggested last week that the moral perfection of Mohammed should now be questioned, even if to do so is akin to poking a hornet's nest with a stick.

It will be common ground in this national debate—if we can get it going—that the vast majority of Muslims live good and peaceful lives. However, when we refer nowadays to extremism, we usually refer to extreme or radical Islam. We do not refer to radical or extreme Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, the Sikh or any other religion. It is also true that much bloodshed, the dark side of our human nature, has erupted within and through Christianity over the centuries, even if its founder was wholly good. But not now; now that darkness is moving strongly within Islam. If we want to stand up to it, I suggest that we should start by talking about it and trying to understand it.

There are many verses in the Koran which justify jihad, so why do we go on pretending that Islam is a religion of peace? It does not help to reply that there is also much violence in the Bible because that is all confined to the Old Testament and orthodox Jews are not killing tens of thousands of innocent people on the strength of it.

When our leading Muslims do try to prove the peacefulness of the Koran, they are less than reassuring. Last September, 119 British imams wrote to the *Independent* newspaper to assure us that the decapitation of two of our aid workers in Syria was,

“nowhere justified in the Koran”.

To support this they quoted from sura 5 verse 32 thus:

“Whosoever kills a human being ... it is as if he kills the entire human race”.

That sounds peaceful enough until you fill in the dots, which go,

“unless it be for murder, or for spreading mischief in the land”.

So the Koran actually says that you can be killed for spreading mischief in the land, which to the jihadists is simply not being a Muslim or helping the victims of their brutality. Is that the best that 119 of our leading imams can do? The very next verse—sura 5 verse 33—details the punishment for those who spread mischief in the land, which is,

“execution or crucifixion or the cutting of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land”—

not exactly peaceful stuff.

In 2013, I mentioned the Muslim tenet of abrogation, whereby when there is contradiction in the Koran or in the example of Mohammed, the later verses or actions abrogate or cancel the earlier ones. This is a serious problem for our debate because the Koran and

Mohammed became steadily more violent as he went through life and Muslims are enjoined to follow the Koran and Mohammed's example.

Today I fear I should mention another tenet, al-Hijrah, by which Muslims are instructed gradually to subjugate their host societies to Islam. It comes from Mohammed's example after he moved from Mecca to Medina in 622. When he had accepted his multifaith hosts' hospitality for five years, and his new religion had grown sufficiently, he offered them the options of conversion, exile or death. He ordered the deaths of several hundred and Islam went on to conquer most of the known world. So is it not rather worrying that one of the Trojan horse schools in Birmingham is actually called the Al-Hijrah School?

Is it not also worrying that our Muslim population has grown some 75% in the last 10 years, up from 1.6 million to 2.7 million, largely concentrated in a few cities and with a third of it under the age of 15? The Government tolerate sharia law, under which a man can have four wives, many of whom are having disadvantaged children who therefore become food for jihad. If we cannot give them something better to live for, and if present trends continue, I fear that civil unrest lies ahead.

I repeat that a large majority of our Muslim population is indeed mild and peace-loving, but I suggest that they are not doing enough to stand up to their violent co-religionists. And why should they? It would be dangerous, and all they have to do is to proclaim that Islam is a religion of peace which the jihadists misinterpret. So have we become their generous hosts and are they now fellow travellers on their way to al-Hijrah, blindly supported by our well-meaning but ignorant political class?

We must somehow make it worth their while to reform their fearsome religion and we must support them if they try. To this end I have suggested before that the Government should facilitate and support a major Muslim council in this country which could clarify the meaning of Islam here and cast the jihadists out of that new Islam. Without some major initiative of that kind, I fear that the long-term future of our Judaeo-Christian culture looks bleak indeed.

7.57 pm

**Baroness Byford (Con):** My Lords, I am glad to be taking part in today's debate on the gracious Speech, which links together home affairs, local government, energy, the environment and agriculture. It is the prime responsibility of any Government to defend and keep safe its people and feed its citizens. My main focus will be on agriculture. I should again remind the House of my family's farming interests.

First, I wish to touch on local issues. I welcome the move to local approval of onshore wind farms. Large-scale developments that justify their existence on the basis of serving large numbers of households and enterprises have commonly been sited outside the large conurbations. For example, reclamation sites and large-scale incinerators are to be found in cities but much urban waste disposal is located in the countryside. The same is true of wind farms. I wonder whether the main reason they are banished is that they would upset too many people in

the cities, although, if they were closer to the users of their power output, their efficiencies would be greater and would bring greater rewards to people locally.

Secondly, I support the Government's moves to make it easier for those in rented accommodation to buy their homes. However, I listened with great interest to noble Lords' contributions today and I will look very carefully at the details of the housing Bill when it comes before us. Ownership confers rights and responsibilities and tends to strengthen the sense of community in an area. However, in rural areas there are few if any large blocks of flats and social housing tends to be of the semi-detached or short terrace variety. Can the Minister tell me whether the Government have plans to ensure that any of those homes bought under their new right-to-buy proposal will attract a presumption against, for example, knocking two into one because obviously one would then lose yet another house in those areas? Will the Government allow for property bought under this legislation that comes up for sale within a given period to first be offered to the original owner at the original sale price, adjusted for any change in condition and movement on the house price index? I wonder, too, whether the house sales might have any restrictions on them; for example, looking particularly at rural needs. The noble Earl, Lord Lytton, spoke about needs or demands and he was quite right to do so because the whole point of these houses is to enable people to continue to work in rural areas.

If I might make another point on that, and particularly on the housing associations, over the years landowners have given and continue to give the value of their land to those housing associations. I wonder what the future will hold for that practice if people realise that actually that will not fulfil the original intention, which was made when the landlord gave original approval. As I say, I wait to see the detail of the Bill because we are still uncertain how that will work.

Turning to agriculture and horticulture, the food and farming industry is hugely important. It employs some 3.6 million people and was worth some £12.8 billion last year. It is crucial to the country's economy. But we still produce only around 60% of our indigenous food and yields have not grown in the way that they might have done. As a consequence, we rely heavily on imports. I am glad that the Conservative Party manifesto included, "a 25 year plan to grow more, buy more and sell more British food".

We look forward to this strategy being launched before the end of this year.

Food remains the UK's largest manufacturing sector—16% of the total—and the farming industry is the bedrock of that growth. But agriculture faces many challenges, both in individual sectors such as dairy, which has already been mentioned, and more generally, such as with European restrictions on the use of pesticides. Currently, however, the largest challenge is surely the failure of yet another attempt to computerise applications for farm payments. The difficulties affect all farmers, whether they head up a large estate or eke out an existence on a few hectares. I sympathise with them all—we are getting there—but I am particularly provoked by the plight of the small family enterprise,

[BARONESS BYFORD]

where every keystroke takes time away from the land, the animals or the farmer's family. The accounts of difficulties are legion. The farming press is full of tales of completed applications that simply did not arrive with the authorities, even electronically; of others that arrived but were muddled with unrelated data; and, worst of all, of hours of labour at a keyboard that result in the failure of the transmission and the loss of all the data input with such care. But the use of science and technology is key to the future development of agriculture. This has been highlighted by other colleagues so I will cut my remarks, bearing in mind the time, but it is a huge challenge.

The other big challenge the industry faces is the whole question of global commodity volatility, which is a major challenge for all industries but particularly agriculture. I wonder whether the Government will take further the manifesto proposition to,

"allow farmers to smooth their profits for tax purposes over five years",

rather than the current two years, which would give greater financial stability.

There are other ways in which the Government have made—and, I hope, will continue to make—a difference. Key to that is rural broadband. It affects all rural businesses. Earned recognition and a single farm inspection scheme would make a huge difference. The capital investment allowance is also a bonus, as is the support for some 50% of our small and medium-size businesses, which are based in rural areas. There is much more but I am well aware that my well-constructed speech has had to be torn in half today.

8.04 pm

**Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer (LD):** My Lords, this Government have told us time and again that they have a long-term economic plan but they have been pretty silent on any environmental plan.

The issue I want to talk about is a big threat to our next generation—I think that is widely recognised—but it is also symptomatic of how economics have taken over from social and environmental issues. The issue I want to talk about is obesity and why the next generation are eating so badly that they are becoming either really obese or malnourished. We now have the worst overweight figures in the OECD. Why is that? I recognise that it is a long-term problem but it starts because the food system itself is broken.

Steve Hilton, David Cameron's erstwhile adviser, was talking about this during the publicity for the publication of his book a couple of weeks ago. He says that taxpayer subsidies prop up an iniquitous structure rigidly set up in favour of "big food" and that those subsidies should be redirected to farmers and producers who are doing the right thing. I agree with him, but what a shame he did not say that when he was at the heart of government. The food sector is always siloed into one government department when actually it is a question of things that happen in Defra, the Department of Health and the Department for Education—it cuts across all departments. So what a shame he did not take advantage of his position while he had it.

The food system is broken. At one end we have the producers producing excellent meat, fruit and veg who cannot make a reasonable living. The noble Lord, Lord Plumb, highlighted the dairy farmers. The noble Lord, Lord Curry, put it rather well. I thought, when he said that the farmers are those with whom the buck stops. Young, enterprising would-be growers cannot even afford the land upon which to start.

Of course, historically the choice was made to subsidise sugar production and not vegetables, and wheat but not fruit, and we have had to live with the results of that. But it is also a part of the system where manufacturers are creating processed foods that really have no nutritional value. Supermarkets are basically in a race to the bottom on cost and have found that the less nutritious food sells if you give it enough so-called mouth appeal—that is, sweet, salty foods. I am sure that noble Lords will be as shocked as I was by the Netmums finding that:

"Sugar is used in massive quantities by the food industry".

The example given was Heinz Farley's Rusks, which contain 29g of sugar per 100g. Those are for babies and nearly a third is sugar.

However, the answers are within our reach. One of the best moments for me of the coalition Government was when Nick Clegg, then Deputy Prime Minister, announced that the long-held Liberal Democrat policy of starting children off with a good nutritional input would become government policy so that proper school meals would be provided for every single infant school pupil for free. I hope that this Government will continue that drive to make sure that at least primary schoolchildren get that sort of start in life. Perhaps the Minister will reflect on the fact that while the Government are set on creating more academies and free schools, those children will be offered meals that do not have to measure up to any nutritional standards at all.

I was very saddened to read that the UK Government are now one of only three out of 28 in the EU to decline to take part in an EU scheme that makes the provision of affordable fruit and vegetables for schoolchildren a possibility. I wonder why the Government have declined to take part in that. We took part in the milk scheme that the EU ran and that has been amalgamated with the fruit and veg scheme. Of course, obesity is not just a UK problem and this is one example of the EU trying to give children a better start in life. Why would we not take part in that? We need a total overhaul of a broken food system which is ruining the health of our children and, at the same time, ruining countries far away.

I am sad, too, that the noble Lord, Lord Eden of Winton, is to leave this House because he is one of the few to have championed biodiversity and what is happening to the rainforests. In countries far away, the impact of the vast quantities of soya grown to feed our cattle and pigs is massive, when our home-grown grass for cattle produces a far healthier diet and meat of a superior quality. Those countries far away are losing their varied habitats to a monoculture, so we will miss the examples from the noble Lord, Lord Eden, of that sort of destruction.

The Government are consulting on the Human Rights Act. They should bear in mind that a decent environment in which to live is one of the most basic

rights of all. Environmental protection, whether here or abroad, must be considered as part of human rights. Although there was no protection of the environment in the original 1949 European Convention on Human Rights, many other countries have since recognised its importance of in their fundamental laws. Notably, Germany added that in 1994, while in France in 2004 an environmental charter was added to the French constitution. We are approaching the 800th anniversary of the Charter of the Forest. We have talked a lot about Magna Carta, which was terrific for the barons, but the Charter of the Forest was what gave the person living on the land, and trying to make a living from it, some rights of their own against the encroachment of the King. It is time that we celebrated that 800th anniversary by thinking about environmental rights and putting them at the heart of what we regard as human rights.

8.11 pm

**The Duke of Somerset (CB):** My Lords, I cannot find “agriculture” in the Queen’s Speech but its first sentence speaks of legislating in the interests of everyone. The UK rural economy is in a precarious position, with the volatility now prevalent in commodity prices. Many rural businesses are unincorporated and have therefore not benefited from the useful cuts in corporation tax that have helped others, so I trust that the lock on the three main taxes—income tax, VAT and national insurance—will not lead to consequent increases in other business and property taxation. I declare an interest, as in the register, as an owner of rural land.

Many farmers have suffered badly from the failure of the £150 million computer system at the Rural Payments Agency. Few agricultural sectors are profitable, while some are barely sustainable, so the failure to make budgeted support payments on time will seriously impact farmers and their relationships with their bank managers. We know that, despite protestations to the contrary from the RPA, some farmers have not—or only very recently—received their replacement paper forms. The 15 June deadline which is close at hand coincides with a period of peak activity in the industry calendar. In addition, the agency is continuing the tradition of gold-plating, as mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Plumb, by demanding extra information on permanent ineligible features which have been easily dealt with in the past. Why are we burdening farmers and the RPA with this extra work at this crucial time? I believe that the basic payment scheme form takes about 10 hours to fill in, so can we be assured that the computer will work properly in 2016?

The Government have announced plans for a farm strategy initiative, which is greatly to be welcomed. I hope that it will put an end to the decades of vacillation and commit to effective measures to combat bovine TB, and produce a robust timetable for culls. Some 4,700 new herds were affected last year and 33,000 cattle compulsorily slaughtered. Why are the lives of one particular specie of animal—badgers—valued more highly than another—cows? They are surely equal, before any consideration of economic value, and should be treated as such. Fifty thousand badgers are killed on the roads; they are not endangered. Despite what the British Veterinary Association states, controlled

shooting is effective and is routinely used to manage deer, foxes and rabbits without drama. If TB could be eradicated on the farm the remaining badgers could coexist with healthy cattle in a balanced countryside, to the benefit of all. However, this would need difficult decisions to be taken with a backbone, and with a strong explanation to the public as to why.

Many noble Lords will have experienced good mobile reception and fast broadband throughout remote parts of the rest of the world, so it is absurd that rural Britain has to suffer poor or non-existent services. All businesses, including rural ones, need a much better service. Ask HMRC why it made people fill in its forms online, or indeed the RPA. One of its directors has said:

“The new Rural Payments online service is the only way to claim your money this year”.

Is there a reason why the Queen’s Speech did not reaffirm the Budget announcement about delivering a universal service obligation on our internet providers? They need this stick to focus on the urgency of meeting delivery targets.

Leaving the EU will not benefit our farmers. It will not reduce the red tape or bureaucracy, nor is it likely to ease the nightmarish regulations and forms so loved by authorities. All our main political parties have indicated that they would reduce subsidies if left to their own devices. Such is the result of the increasing urban focus of politicians. Let us hope that the new farm strategy encourages domestically sourced agricultural produce to counter increasing imports and, most importantly, to enhance and bolster rural businesses.

I turn very briefly to forestry. The wider spread of diseases such as phytophthora in larch, and ash disease, is threatening our landscape. It is important that the Government pay attention to the importation of plants and timber from abroad, which is where these diseases largely come from. Checks and controls need to be strengthened if our countryside is not to be utterly altered, as it was at the time of Dutch elm disease.

8.18 pm

**Baroness Newlove (Con):** My Lords, first, it is a genuine pleasure to see my noble friend Lord Bates continuing on the Front Bench and in the Home Office, as I have got to know him very well in dealing with victims’ matters over the years. I also wish my noble friend Lady Williams well in her new role and hope she enjoys working in the Department for Communities and Local Government, as I did for two years.

It is also a great pleasure to take part in this debate today, in which my main focus will be on victims of crime. I was encouraged to hear the commitment by the Government in the gracious Speech to bring forward measures to increase the rights of victims of crime. As I know from personal experience, the impact of a crime is devastating; the ripple effect changes you and your family’s lives for ever. That is why victims of crime should have proper support and protection for as long as they need it. In some cases this will be for the rest of their lives. Such support should be given to victims as a right and not as a favour or concession. In the same way in which offenders have the right to a fair trial, victims should have the right to a fair chance of recovery.

[BARONESS NEWLOVE]

I therefore welcome the plans to introduce a victims' law. It will be an important and a right step to put victims' rights on a statutory footing. I look forward to knowing more about what the government legislation on a victims' law will look like. For a victims' law to make a real difference to victims, it must lead to a change in how victims are treated. It must not be something that simply sounds good on paper but is not worth the paper it is written on.

My recent review into how victims of crime were treated when they made a complaint found that it is not policies and procedures that make the most difference to victims, but rather how these policies are implemented. Victims want to be listened to, to be treated with sensitivity and respect, and to know who to go to when they have a question or a concern. In other words, it is the quality of the interaction between victims and every single person within our criminal justice system who they come across that makes a difference to their experience and ultimately will lead to a better recovery.

The needs of every victim of crime will be unique to them, and their default button will constantly shift on a daily basis from that in their lives previously. I remember waking up on 10 August 2007 as a wife. Sadly, that night, I went to bed a widow. Victims' rights need to be respected and fully resourced to give them that support. A one-size-fits-all approach may work for agencies, but it simply does not work for victims. Nor do victims want a succession of different faces as they are passed from one agency to another. They want one person who can co-ordinate all the different things that they need from the moment they report a crime to well after the offender is sentenced.

Victims may need a very wide range of rights and support in order to recover from the impact of a crime. In addition to psychological support, they may need help with practical issues such as accommodation, finances and employment. A victim of crime may be unable to work through no fault of their own; or, as happened to me, they may lose the person who was the main breadwinner. I am anxious that the proposed changes to welfare benefits, including the benefit cap, should not add to the trauma of victims or make their journey towards recovery even harder.

I wait to see how the victims' law will deliver more for victims than the existing Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. Under the code, for example, victims already have the right to make a victim's personal statement and to ask to read it aloud, albeit that the small print says that the judge or magistrate can decline this request. So how will this be any different under a victims' law? A victims' law will make a real difference to victims only if it is accessible and enforceable. To make it accessible, victims of crime should have an advocate who can advise them of their rights and act on their behalf to ensure they receive them.

Offenders have a legal representative to ensure they secure their right to a fair trial and to support, so surely victims' rights should be equally protected under a victims' law—the scales of justice being equally balanced not only for those accused but for those victims against whom the crime was committed.

Finally, I want to know how the victims' law will be enforced. For instance, will victims of crime be entitled to legal aid, and what penalties or compensations will apply? So while I welcome the Government's commitment to introducing measures to increase the rights of victims, I will be listening and watching with interest as to how these changes will formulate a genuine difference to victims' experiences, rather than simply being changes to agencies' policies.

I conclude with the words of my noble friend the Minister as he steered this Chamber through the Modern Slavery Bill, when he said:

"At the heart of ... all our work is the desire to ensure that victims receive the protection and support that they deserve and which will help them to recover ... It is vital that we give them the confidence to come forward".—[*Official Report*, 17/11/14; col. 240.]

I respectfully ask noble Lords to keep that train of thought in mind when looking at increasing the rights of victims, as I believe that all victims of crime deserve to be given the best protection and support. Rights for victims should be our first thought, not an afterthought.

8.24 pm

**Baroness Henig (Lab):** My Lords, I want to speak about policing, both in terms of what is promised in the Queen's Speech and how that will impact on police activity and effectiveness, and about one or two significant gaps in the proposals. In doing so, I draw your Lordships' attention to my interests as listed in the Lords register.

We are promised an early policing and criminal justice Bill, and I would very much like to welcome one of its objectives—to reduce the amount of time that police officers currently spend dealing with people with a range of mental health issues, and to ensure that such people have more appropriate safe places in which to be detained than police cells. Such measures are long overdue and have my strong support. However, at the same time, the Queen's Speech makes it clear that the public sector will continue to bear the brunt of the Government's austerity policies, which inevitably will lead to further cuts to police budgets.

My knowledge of economics is not extensive, but I know that the public expenditure cuts of the past five years have resulted not in a reduction of government borrowing, but in a massive increase to a level nearly 70% higher now than in June 2010. So much for continuing the work of bringing the public finances under control. So far this has lost us 17,000 police officers, many from the front line. How many more thousands will soon be sacrificed to the false god of austerity, and will we still retain a viable and resilient police service?

We know that what the public value above all else from the police is good, consistent neighbourhood policing, which is the bedrock of the British model of policing, and I cannot see how forces can continue to deliver this on the severely reduced budgets they can expect in the next few years. It is officer intensive, and needs continuity of personnel to be effective, and forces will struggle to provide it. But I want to be constructive in this debate, and to make three suggestions which might help to protect neighbourhood policing and preserve those basic ingredients of the British policing model which people value so highly.

My first suggestion arises from the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, where it is proposed that a directly elected mayor would take control of policing—and, I assume, would be able to raise significant funding locally to pay for local policing initiatives and priorities. I am speculating a bit here but, given the level of financial autonomy that Scotland will surely soon receive, I cannot believe that our English regions and future metro mayors will settle for less than an equally significant level of devolution of financial powers from the Treasury. We already have directly elected police and crime commissioners in place, albeit elected on abysmally low electoral turnouts and, to be consistent, surely the same principles should be applied. Surely police and crime commissioners should be able, having consulted and received the support of a majority of people in their force area, to raise the local police precept by more than the 2% currently allowed. This would be a way of injecting much-needed funding directly into the safeguarding of neighbourhood policing, and would underline the local accountability side of policing in England and Wales.

If the Government are not able or willing to persuade the Treasury to lessen its vice-like grip on police spending to that degree—and I suspect that that might be the case—maybe my second suggestion might be more welcome. Can we really continue to sustain 43 separate forces? Scotland has one, Northern Ireland one, and there have been proposals to combine the four Welsh forces into one. Is it not time to revisit the strong case put several years ago for a restructuring of the present 43 forces into 10 to 12 strategic forces, so that neighbourhood policing can continue to be delivered in the same way as now, but enhanced and supported by a more strategically focused provision of support and protective services above it? Such rationalisation could deliver not just significant efficiencies but substantial savings that could be ploughed back into policing.

My third suggestion is to expand the number of partnerships between the police and the private security sector. I know that the police and the public are wary of the privatisation of policing, as many see it, and I understand that, but there are many areas in which the private sector is already working very cost effectively with the police, and targeted collaboration will be one way in which the police can reduce some of the burdens they carry and make some savings. There are already some promising initiatives under way—the long-standing Project Griffin and, more recently, the police and security group initiative, which has just started between the Metropolitan Police and representatives of private security.

If such collaboration is to flourish, senior police officers and the public have to feel able to trust private security companies, and at present we know this is not the case. This, of course, is why so many of us in and around the private security industry have been calling for business licensing of companies so that criminality is rooted out of the sector, and that standards, pay and working conditions are driven up. The Government promised four years ago to introduce business licensing of private security companies but failed to deliver. A number of busy people wasted a lot of time in endless meetings which led nowhere, and businesses were not able to plan properly, not knowing whether business licensing was coming. I hope we will not see the sorry

saga repeated in this Parliament. We can be fairly certain that business licensing will be introduced in Scotland, where the Scottish Government already require that public sector contracts can be awarded only to security companies that have approved contractor status, and I would not be surprised if Northern Ireland follows Scotland. I hope the Minister can tell us whether business licensing will be introduced in England and Wales and give definite dates because without such licensing the police will continue to be wary of working more closely with the private security sector.

If business licensing of private security is introduced, I urge that it covers private investigation businesses. Private investigators cover a wide range of inquiries relating to fraud, employee theft, the suspected infidelity of partners and missing people, and their opportunity to pose a serious threat to individual people if they act unscrupulously is, as we have seen in the past few years, very great. A former president of the Association of British Investigators shocked me recently by reminding us that it is still perfectly possible for a paedophile who has been released from prison to set up an agency to trace missing children. This has happened, and it cannot be right. So much for safeguarding children. How much longer will it be before the Government honour the Home Secretary's pledge to license private investigators?

I hope some of the suggestions I have made to fill the gaps in the Queen's Speech in relation to policing may receive sympathetic consideration from the Minister when he answers the debate later this evening.

8.33 pm

**Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville (LD):**

My Lords, I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Kerslake, on his excellent maiden speech, with which I agree. It is a great privilege to take part in today's debate on the gracious Speech. Having just been re-elected to South Somerset District Council, local government continues to be very dear to my heart, and the provision of adequate, decent and affordable housing is a key role of local authorities. As has already been said, there is a chronic housing shortage in the country today. This has built up over a number of years and is now critical.

I understand the Prime Minister's wish to increase home ownership and extend the right to buy to housing association tenants, but I fear his promise has serious flaws and will do nothing to alleviate the housing shortage. This view is shared by housing associations and a number of organisations concerned with the housing market.

The Chartered Institute of Housing believes that extending the right to buy to housing associations will not tackle the housing crisis and could make things worse for those on lower incomes already struggling to access a decent home at a price they can afford. It would have an impact on both housing associations and on local authorities, as councils would have to sell off their most valuable homes to fund replacements, as has already been said. The Government have said that replacements for both housing association and council homes sold under the extended scheme would be built in the same area, but this will be heavily dependent on land availability and will therefore be extremely challenging in some inner city and rural areas.

[BARONESS BAKEWELL OF HARDINGTON MANDEVILLE]

I represent a very rural area where providing affordable housing is particularly challenging. There are examples of communities working to provide affordable housing under the rural exception scheme, allowing green-belt land to be used and retained in perpetuity for people with local connections. The right-to-buy plan would seem to be entirely incompatible with this scheme. New occupants of rural exception schemes could be guaranteed a financial windfall and, at the same time, affordable homes would be lost to the community. Right to buy has seen many homes in rural and coastal communities sold and often not replaced.

In response to a letter from a constituent writing about affordable homes, the Prime Minister said:

"The fine details of this proposal have yet to be worked out but I have certainly taken on board your desire to ensure that affordable developments in rural communities of less than 3,000 people continue to be exempt from the Right to Buy".

Right to acquire does not currently apply to rural communities with fewer than 3,000 homes. Right to buy is also currently not applied to sheltered, supported or adapted housing. Could the Minister give reassurances that rural communities will indeed be exempt from this extension to housing association tenants and provide clarity on the continuation of this practice? Similarly, the National Housing Federation has said:

"We fully support the aspiration of homeownership, but this policy does nothing for the 11 million private renters and three million adult children living at home with their parents. If there is £22.5 billion of public money available for housing, we should use it to build homes the next generation needs, not just gift it to the lucky few already housed in housing association homes".

It goes on:

"An extension to the Right to Buy would mean that housing associations are working to keep pace with replacements rather than building homes for the millions stuck on waiting lists".

These views are also shared by the Local Government Association.

Funding apart, it is a significant challenge to replace homes sold due to the constraints of acquiring land and planning consent. Historically, right to buy has led to the replacement of one home for every 10 sold. While the proposed Bill signals changes to freeing up brownfield sites and planning, there will always be a time delay in any replacement.

Many homes sold under right to buy are subsequently sold on, and often become private rentals at a higher rent than the previous affordable one. These properties are frequently poorly maintained and the additional rent often funded through housing benefit. This is a double whammy for the taxpayer, who is providing two subsidies, one through the discounted purchase price and the other through housing benefit. This cannot be right.

8.39 pm

**Lord Sheikh (Con):** My Lords, Her Majesty, in her most gracious Speech, said that measures will be brought forward to promote social cohesion and protect people by tackling extremism. Any proposed provisions will affect the Muslim community, so I will focus my comments today on issues relating to our community. I wish to make several points about the Muslim community, and I ask that your Lordships kindly permit me to speak for more than seven minutes. I hope to speak for about 10 minutes.

There are more than 3 million Muslims in the United Kingdom, and they have contributed significantly to Britain in all walks of life. We must remember and respect the positive aspects of British Muslims. There are Muslim philanthropists and entrepreneurs, and we also have successful Muslims in the professions, politics, academia, in the media and on the sports field. Having said that, I realise that Muslims are going through a critical phase, and there are problems associated with some sections of the community.

Muslims have been severely criticised in some quarters. Some of the criticism is not at all justified but is either deliberate or based on misunderstandings. We have been and are subjected to Islamophobia in some parts of the media and by a few politicians and organisations—I believe they have their own agenda. The attacks on us are now regular, and some people feel that it is fair game to have a go at Muslims.

I have been active in community and charitable work for many years, and am a patron of six Muslim and non-Muslim organisations. I founded and chair the Conservative Muslim Forum, which is now an active and robust organisation. I was approached by several Muslim leaders to look at the current problems affecting the Muslim community, and have decided to be actively involved with the Muslim community and work out solutions. I have researched many statistics, but as the time is limited I will mention just three findings. Some 75% of Muslims believe that they are integrating into British society, whereas only 47% of British people opine that they are doing so. Muslims in Britain are overwhelmingly young, and the performance of some Muslims at schools is low. Some 46% of British Muslims live in the most deprived 10% of areas in the United Kingdom.

Over the past year I have travelled to various parts of the country and talked to leaders of mosques, imams, heads of community centres and members of the community. About two weeks ago I was the keynote speaker at a gathering of more than 2,000 Muslims in Birmingham, many of whom spoke to me afterwards. I have now identified a number of issues, which total 23 points, and have prepared a report on them. I do not have time to mention them all today, but I will state five—radicalisation, education standards, lack of engagement with the young, deprivation, and the Prevent strategy not being effective.

I have been asked by several Muslims to make it known to the Government that they have not engaged adequately with the community. I, too, feel that that has been lacking. We feel that the Government should do more to interact with the right people, look at the various problems and help the community to take positive actions. In addressing the problems we need the involvement of the Muslim community, the Government, the police, schools, local authorities and the relevant agencies. We are trying to raise awareness that there is also an onus on the Muslim community to be honest and realise that there are problems, and to take positive actions to remedy the issues as part of a holistic approach in conjunction with others.

In assessing radicalisation we must realise that this has been partly brought about by the actions of the West, including the United Kingdom, overseas. The action of a tiny minority of the young in being radicalised



could be born out of frustration, but we must do what we can to allay these feelings. When the United Kingdom, together with the United States, decided unilaterally to invade Iraq, there was no adequate plan for action to be taken after Saddam Hussein was toppled. A vacuum was created that led subsequently to violence, death and destruction, and to al-Qaeda in Iraq taking root in the country. It also created a severe rift between the Sunnis and the Shias.

We bombed Libya without an adequate plan to be implemented after Gaddafi was got rid of. We invaded Afghanistan without realising the consequences. In future, the United Kingdom must have an adequate plan and think of all the consequences and implications before glibly invading any territory. We also have double standards when looking at the issues of Gaza and Palestine, and this is causing disquiet among Muslims. We need a more balanced and equitable approach to these issues, and we could begin by recognising Palestine as an independent state.

Over the last year we have seen the rise of ISIS—or Daesh, as I prefer to call them. What they are doing is not at all Islamic, and their interpretation of our glorious religion is totally wrong. It is imperative for the imams, Muslim leaders and parents, together with everyone in the community, to explain to the young the true values of Islam. In order to combat radicalisation, we must also use social media effectively to block information that unduly influences young people, and to convey the true message of Islam. Both the media and politicians should not refer to terrorism as Islamic, because Islam does not permit terrorism. They must use appropriate language. The word jihad is misused, as jihad involves internal and external struggle to do one's utmost for good.

In deciding on measures to combat extremism, we must undertake extensive and balanced research. The Government must understand the challenging issues facing the Muslim community. The Prevent agenda has created some problems and needs to be reappraised. Some have even described it as toxic. Sometimes, the Government are ill advised in taking action. For example, I was told that the letter written to mosques in January of this year by the right honourable Eric Pickles was not well received by some members of the community. I agree that counterextremism measures must be firm, but they should not be fierce and should not alienate the community. The Government must win the support of the Muslim community and must not be seen as the big brother wielding a stick. Otherwise, we will get a negative reaction. We must also respect freedom of speech, as we in this country take pride in our democratic values. The Muslim community will listen and take appropriate action, as part of the holistic approach we need to implement.

I understand that measures may be introduced such as banning orders, extremism disruption orders and powers to close premises. I suggest that before any powers are approved and implemented, adequate research and consultation with the community should be undertaken. The community will co-operate if there is appropriate engagement. We need to be very careful before interfering or applying any form of restriction on the activities of Muslim charities, which do very valuable humanitarian work across the world.

Finally, I would like to make the further point that we need to look at other issues concerning the community, including the education of the young and deprivation. I will be taking part in the proceedings on the proposed legislation and will make suggestions where I feel that these are appropriate.

8.49 pm

**Lord Green of Deddington (CB):** My Lords, I declare an interest as chairman of Migration Watch UK.

Noble Lords will not be surprised that I welcome the Government's commitment to control immigration and their ambition, as they describe it, to reduce net migration to tens of thousands. Time is very short, so I will keep this speech to four minutes and will focus on three of the main consequences if the Government were to fail in achieving their objectives and their ambition: population, infrastructure and, especially, housing.

As far as the population is concerned, we are now 65 million in the UK. On current trends, that will rise to 70 million in seven years' time and to 80 million in 25 years' time. These are astounding figures. They are based on the present level of 300,000 net migration. In this Parliament alone, our population will increase by 3 million.

What does that mean for infrastructure? These additional millions are bound to require a whole range of infrastructure—hospitals, homes, schools and so on—at the very time that government departments are being asked to reduce their budgets more than ever before. Where on earth will the money come from for this infrastructure?

Lastly, I turn to housing. The discussion about housing is almost always about supply, not demand. I notice that four or five, if not more—maybe six or seven—noble Lords have spoken about housing and it has always been about supply. In the past five years, the number of households headed by a person born overseas—that is, by an immigrant—have increased by an average of 115,000 a year. That is 78% of the net increase in households. Surely it is blindingly obvious that an important means of tackling the housing crisis is to reduce immigration and therefore demand, and it is strange that so few people are prepared to say so.

What can the Government do to bring immigration under control? Of course, you have to divide the figures into non-EU and EU. As far as non-EU migrants are concerned, the picture is stark. Since 1998, arrivals have virtually trebled from about 100,000 a year to 300,000, but departures are pretty well flat at not much more than 100,000. We therefore have to redouble our efforts to ensure that migrants leave when their visas expire, especially—dare I say it?—students. I know that that is a matter of real concern for many of the vice-chancellors and so on in this House. However, the fact is that they have been arriving in the UK at an average rate of about 150,000 a year, but those who are recorded as leaving amount to 50,000, so somewhere there is a huge gap of 100,000 people. Some will stay on legally but we have to recognise that many will do so illegally, and that is why I think the Government are right to make the latter much more difficult.

[LORD GREEN OF DEDDINGTON]

That leaves EU migration, which is of course an entirely different story but it accounts for very nearly half of the intake. Negotiations have barely begun but it is no exaggeration to say that the Government's success or otherwise will determine their ability, and that of all future Governments, to control our borders.

Finally, let us recognise that failure to bring immigration under control would eventually undermine our social cohesion and, indeed, our sense of nationhood. It would also undermine—seriously, I believe—confidence in our political system, which for far too long has turned a deaf ear to the genuine concerns of a very large majority of the electorate.

These issues can no longer be ducked. A focused and constructive discussion based squarely on the facts is absolutely essential, and I hope that it will take place in this House.

8.54 pm

**Lord Framlingham (Con):** My Lords, I want to speak about a subject that is not specifically mentioned in the Queen's Speech but is very relevant to large parts of it: trees, particularly urban trees.

Trees give us their grace and beauty. They improve our air quality, particularly in inner cities, by taking in our carbon dioxide and giving us back their oxygen. They give us shelter and shade, act as barriers to noise and dust, resist flooding, cool our cities and even help to calm traffic. In short, they massively improve the quality of our lives. Whether in building new housing developments, large or small, giving Battersea power station a new lease of life, or massive projects such as HS2 and the huge environmental impact that they are bound to have, it is vital that protecting existing trees and the careful selection, planting and establishment of new ones is given the highest possible priority.

In all this, the Government will not be short of advice and pressure. The Woodland Trust is determined not just to plant new woodlands but to protect old and particularly ancient woodlands from threats posed by schemes such as HS2. The Trees and Design Action Group, TDAG, is a charity embracing a host of organisations and companies interested and qualified in the planting and care of trees in the urban landscape. The Natural Capital Committee advises the Government on large-scale projects and the national macroeconomic benefits derived from trees. The Arboricultural Association has in its members a wealth of knowledge about the practical aspects of planting and caring for trees and is often the first to spot the signs of disease. The Forestry Commission has now to wear many more hats than that of pure forestry. Just a few days ago, at a London tree awards ceremony, I heard an excellent presentation by its director, Ian Gambles, on the London i-Tree eco project. Time does not permit me to elaborate, but this is the largest tree survey of its kind in the world and is expected to have a transformational impact on how London's urban forest is recognised and managed.

This brings me to the question of which Minister has responsibility for urban trees. In answer to a Parliamentary Question that I put down earlier this year I was told that:

"No single Government department is responsible for the planting of trees in the urban environment".

I believe that the time has come to draw all these threads together and consider having an individual Minister responsible for urban trees.

I want to say a word about biosecurity and quarantine, as was touched on briefly by the noble Duke, the Duke of Somerset. The ravages of Dutch elm disease, imported on logs from Canada in the 1960s, robbed us of all our great elm trees. Ash dieback is now threatening to have the same terrible effect, with diseased imported trees again involved and no remedy in sight except the depressing policy of "managed decline". We have other problems of foreign origin threatening our native trees, such as the oak processionary moth. A disease of plane trees is now rampant in France. I invite you to imagine London, its streets, squares and parks, without its London plane trees. Box blight, of South American origin, is causing the ripping apart of some of our most famous gardens and has now been found in our woodlands. In southern Italy, a bacterial disease that hails from the Americas is sweeping through thousands of acres of olives.

Modern trading in and transporting of plants has made the threat to our trees frightening. There are two things that we can and must do. First, we must grow more of what we can grow. Secondly, and more importantly, we must put in place with the utmost urgency a strict quarantine regime that will prevent plants being imported and immediately sold, scattered and planted all over the country. In answer to another Parliamentary Question that I put down last July I was told by Defra that the number of plants, bare root and container, imported into the UK in 2012-13 was 2.5 million. By 2013-14—that is the planting season—this had risen to 3 million, an increase of half a million trees and plants. Unlike our European neighbours, where most of our imported trees come from, we are an island, with all the biosecurity advantages that that gives us. We should use them to the full. I acknowledge that there are some existing rules and regulations, but they are far from watertight. We must have a sensible quarantine system in place without delay. We do not have to devise it from scratch: some nurseries are already implementing their own. Allied to this, we must have rigidly enforced traceability so that any infected plants can rapidly be tracked down and destroyed.

I acknowledge that the nation's tree budget is not in the same league as defence, the NHS or education, but it must be substantial and it must be enough. It seems inevitable that, as our country grows, growth now is everything: we must build, build, build. But if we want to keep the heart of our country for future generations and keep the hearts of our towns and cities, we must have the wisdom, the foresight and the funding to plant, plant, plant: to plant our trees and, having planted, care for them.

9 pm

**Lord Patel of Bradford (Lab):** My Lords, two Mayday calls were made last year and I am pleased that both have been heard by the Home Secretary. I hope that Mrs May can make it a third this year.

During last year's debate on the Queen's Speech, I raised concerns about 17 year-olds taken into custody by the police and treated as adults rather than children. I highlighted the case of Joe Lawton, who in 2012

took his own life. His father found him dead with a police charge sheet at his feet. Two days earlier, Joe had been held in a police cell overnight on suspicion of drink-driving. Joe was 17. I also spoke of 17 year-old Edward Thornber, who in 2011 was caught with 50p worth of cannabis. Distraught at the thought of life with a criminal record, he hanged himself. Those two children were robbed of their future, and their families robbed of sharing it and seeing their children reach adulthood.

Those cases, along with the legal challenge mounted by 17 year-old Hughes Cousins-Chang, who was kept in custody for 12 hours, during which he underwent the ordeal of a strip search before being released without charge, led to the Home Secretary changing the PACE Code C, which I warmly welcomed, but I warned of two issues: first, the lack of additional resources going to local government to deal with this change, especially given that around 75,000 17 year-olds are taken into police custody every year; and, secondly, anomalies that remained, including under Section 65, where although an intimate search on a 16 year-old in relation to a suspected drugs offence requires both individual and parental consent, such body cavity searches can be carried out on a 17 year-old girl without her parents ever knowing. I am pleased to hear that the Home Secretary, Mrs May, heard that Mayday call and has promised to ensure through the policing and criminal justice legislation announced in the gracious Speech that such anomalies will be removed and that 17 year-olds will be treated as children under all the provisions of PACE.

The second Mayday call came from Paul Netherton, assistant chief constable at Devon & Cornwall Police, who in November last year took to Twitter to express his frustration and voice concerns for the welfare of a 16 year-old girl who had been sectioned under the Mental Health Act, but with no bed available had spent two days in a cell at Torquay police station. Later, a report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary highlighted a case in Nottinghamshire where a 16 year-old girl was detained for 52 hours in a central police custody suite before being transferred to a healthcare setting. For the first 44 hours in custody, she went without food or water.

I think that Mrs May has heard that Mayday call, too. At the Police Federation conference this May, she promised to ban the use of police cells as places of safety for under-18s with mental health problems. I understand that the legislation has three other aims: to further reduce the use of police cells in the case of adults, which is good; to reduce the current 72-hour maximum period of detention; and to extend the power to detain under Section 136 to any place other than a private residence. I welcome Mrs May's aims and look forward to seeing the detail in the Bill.

However, two immediate issues come to mind which I hope Ministers will be able to answer during the passage of the Bill, although it would be helpful if the Minister could shed some light on the matter today. First, will vulnerable people be discharged from custody to the streets if the reduced time is up and no hospital bed or other appropriate place has been found? Could this inadvertently result in families and partners being placed at risk? Secondly, what assurances will there be

that any other place is safe and appropriate? I am sure that these and other issues will be debated during the course of the Bill and satisfactory and workable solutions found.

Progress on two Mayday calls has been made. My Mayday call to Mrs May for this year is of equal urgency and severity but for which I have yet to hear any firm proposals from the Government. Every year, hundreds of deaths occur in police custody, prisons and psychiatric hospitals that are later deemed to have been preventable. Last February an excellent report, *Preventing Death in Detention of Adults with Mental Health Conditions*, was published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The report highlights that between 2010 and 2013, 367 adults with mental health conditions died of non-natural causes while in state detention in police cells and psychiatric wards. Another 295 adults died in prison of non-natural causes, many of whom had mental health conditions. Since 2013 the number has risen considerably. That is well over 650 preventable deaths.

I am sure everyone will agree that each of these deaths is a tragedy. It is a terrible end to a troubled life for those with mental health conditions and a tragedy for the loved ones left behind who have suffered as a result of these deaths. They have to come to terms not only with their terrible loss but with the tragic circumstances surrounding the death of their loved ones, most importantly where the death could have been avoided but there has been significant failure by the state.

Many agencies are involved in ensuring the safety and care of people with mental health conditions, and all try to do their best within their own constraints, but often co-ordination of policy and service delivery is poor. The Government must do more to ensure that such tragic deaths do not occur in the future. I ask Mrs May to work with her ministerial colleagues, in particular the Lord Chancellor, to see how the safety and care of people with mental health conditions can be improved within the policing and criminal justice system.

On a final note, I wish Mrs May well with her own Mayday call. Your Lordships will remember the one; it was for the Conservative Party to be more compassionate and to lose its label as the nasty party. I humbly suggest that that will not be easy against the backdrop of the proposed £12 billion cuts in the welfare system and the potential abolition of the Human Rights Act. However, if some of the issues that I have highlighted today are appropriately addressed, it may go some way towards helping her to answer her own Mayday call.

9.07 pm

**Lord Strasburger (Non-Aff):** My Lords, we live in dangerous times—the danger of imported terrorism from various parts of the world; threats from newly aggressive Russia and China; and danger from rogue nuclear states such as Iran and North Korea. However, the biggest peril we face is losing, or throwing away, the freedoms, liberty, privacy and lifestyle that have set this country apart from others in the world—the very way of life that Islamic State, al-Qaeda and groups like them seek to destroy.

[LORD STRASBURGER]

If we are not careful, we will allow misguided people within our country and Government to turn Britain into a country where the authorities know everything about the private lives of all of us. Even under a benign and well-meaning government, these excessive powers are vulnerable to misuse by rogue elements within it or by criminals at home or abroad. Worse still, the ability to know everything about everyone would be ripe for wholesale abuse by a less well-intentioned future regime, which would find that it possessed ready-made tools for repression.

We must deny the Home Secretary and her most ardent securocrat, Charles Farr, their attempt to have pretty well unlimited and untrammelled access to the most private data of everyone in our country. In fact, we should be reducing, not increasing, their reach into the lives of innocent citizens. They have shown no inclination whatever to consider the possible unintended consequences, if they are unintended, of the draconian powers they are demanding. They do not believe, and they cannot see, that there are compelling arguments to restrain those powers and that there is another side to the coin. They hardly engage at all with those who speak for the need for constraints on intrusive powers, for proper authorisation, for transparency and for oversight. When they are forced to enter the debate, they do so only in the most desultory and reluctant manner.

When the investigatory powers Bill is published, we can hope that it will bring the existing legislation up to date and clearly restrict the occasions when snooping is permitted. We can hope that the Bill will remove the hidden loopholes that have allowed the state massively to expand, completely in secret and behind closed doors, its prying into our private lives without the informed permission of Parliament and the people. We can hope that the Bill introduces more independent authorisation procedures which ensure that intrusions occur only when they are necessary and proportionate. We can hope that, for the first time, there will be meaningful oversight to ensure that non-compliance is discovered and punished. We can hope that the Bill contains these reasonable and essential provisions, along with others which are so important if these powers are to have legitimacy with the public.

I, for one, am not holding my breath. The Home Secretary and Mr Farr both have plenty of previous form, and it is not encouraging. They have demonstrated time and again that they are either incapable or unwilling to come to Parliament with a balanced package that protects the population from harm by permitting the most aggressive intrusion into the lives of major criminals and terrorists but which leaves the rest of us alone. The Government have repeatedly made the pro forma statement that all UK surveillance is conducted within the law. This has recently been shown to be untrue, and in any case it is a worthless claim because the legal structures surrounding surveillance are riddled with flaws and loopholes—some, I believe, inserted deliberately. For example, the Home Office has recently had to admit to the Investigatory Powers Tribunal that the flimsy protections that should prevent interception of ordinary citizens' communications without a warrant are being circumvented on a wholesale basis. This is

because the Home Office decided that anyone who uses popular services such as Google, Twitter, Facebook and many others are exempt from protection from unwarranted snooping merely because the servers of those companies are located outside the UK. With gaping holes like that in our legislation, who needs to break the law?

No sensible parliamentarian will deny our police and security services all the powers they need to investigate and prevent serious crime and terrorism, but these highly intrusive powers to pry into all aspects of a person's most intimate and personal life must be very strictly targeted on individuals who are genuinely suspected of planning or perpetrating the most serious crimes, and no one else. The state has no right to snoop on the rest of us; it is as simple as that. The current legal framework fails to make the distinction clear, and for that reason it is not fit for purpose. It also fails to deliver an oversight process which works so that abuses of the rules, such as they are, will probably be detected and punished. For that reason, too, it is not fit for purpose. With the Conservatives no longer constrained by the principles and common sense of the Liberal Democrats, there is every reason to fear that the forthcoming legislation will be long on more intrusive powers and decidedly short on limitations on the use of those powers, and the oversight to make sure that those limitations are being observed.

Two days ago, American lawmakers made the historic decision, prompted by the Snowden revelations, to start reversing four decades of ever-increasing intrusion into their citizens' affairs, and to introduce real transparency into the use of these powers. I put it to noble Lords that it would be perverse and completely unacceptable for our Government's response to Snowden's disclosures of secret and unauthorised mass surveillance in this country to be for the state to try to go deeper and deeper into places where it has no business.

With the sad lack of a substantial number of MPs who will fight for our privacy and our liberties in the other place, it will be up to Peers on all sides of this House to fill that vacuum on behalf of British citizens. We must stand firm against unbalanced and disproportionate prying into our lives. We must insist on clearly defined limits on the use of these surveillance powers and must diligently search out and destroy the loopholes that the Government will no doubt insert again. We must ensure that the oversight of the use of these powers is so effective and penetrating that it acts as a real deterrent to abuse. It will be our duty not just to stop but to reverse the hidden drift into more mass surveillance, more snooping on the innocent and more gratuitous prying into our lives by people who have no need and no right to do it.

9.16 pm

**Lord Ahmed (Non-Aff):** My Lords, there is deep concern over the proposed changes to the UK's counterterrorism and security framework. Another of the many anti-terrorism, counterterrorism and now counterextremism Bills was announced and initial reports suggest that the drafting of key terms in the Bill, such as "extremist" and "harmful", will be so vague as to catch peaceful protestors. These changes have serious and negative implications for the human rights of

citizens. There is no doubt that the Government have an obligation to protect the lives and liberties of the public from harm. However, it is imperative that laws intended to do that do not at the same time violate rights.

As the noble Lord, Lord Sheikh, said, the British Muslim community is currently feeling targeted by the proposed legislation. Many of them fear that the Government are launching a cold war against them. British values, as defined by Theresa May, such as democracy, the rule of law, tolerance and acceptance of different faiths, are inherently Muslim values, too. These are exemplified in the teachings of the Koran and the Prophet Muhammad's practices. The cliché that there is a dichotomy in being a Muslim and a law-abiding British citizen is untrue and misguided.

Muslims have been in Europe in large numbers since the 1950s. They are well integrated and make a very positive contribution to British society. It is only in the last 20 years or so that violent extremism has gained momentum. Every year, Muslims contribute billions to the UK economy. They make a very positive contribution to the manufacturing and textile industries, transport, health, education and other government services. Our national dish is chicken tikka masala and catering industry businesses worth more than £4 billion annually are owned by Muslims. Olympic superstars Mo Farah and Amir Khan, the boxer, and "Dragons' Den" star James Caan are all from the Muslim community. British Muslims often cite an example of Islamic teachings on human freedom. I shall quote Koran 2:256—I will not misquote as was done earlier—which states:

"Let there be no compulsion in religion".

Koran 18:29 states:

"Whosoever wills, let him"—

or her—

"believe, and whosoever wills, let him disbelieve".

Muslims living in non-Muslim countries consider it a religious duty enshrined in the Koran to respect and uphold the law of the land that they are living in. Nationality and immigration laws are classified as covenants by the majority of Muslims. Thus, violating the law of the land would be tantamount to violating the Koranic command to abide strictly by any covenant one enters into. I quote Koran 17:34:

"And fulfil every covenant. Verily, every covenant will be enquired into (by God)".

Ten days ago, it was reported that Britain's most senior Muslim police officer, Mak Chishty, has warned that young people who stop drinking, socialising with friends and shopping at Marks & Spencer could be in the process of becoming radicalised. These are ludicrous statements, because it could equally be argued that stopping drinking and socialising and focusing on other things, such as education and so on, could be regarded as typical advice from parents to children.

Recently, parents complained about a questionnaire given to year 6 children, aged nine, in Waltham Forest—22% of its population are Muslim. If your Lordships have any grandchildren of this age, like mine, you will know their opinion on grandparents, let alone on identity, arranged marriages, God and much more.

The Radicalisation Leading to Terrorism Programme has been funded through the EU and is designed,

"to identify the initial seeds of radicalisation with children of primary school age".

The recent "Trojan horse" controversy has already fuelled anti-Muslim sentiments. ChildLine reported that the number of complaints of bullying rose during that period. Young people in inner-city schools were ringing in, complaining of being called names such as "terrorist" and "suicide bomber".

For the vast majority of Muslims living in the UK, the issue of concern is not that they see conflict between Muslim values and British values, but that their children are growing up in a society in which an imaginary binary opposition is constantly propagated by some politicians, the media and extremist elements in their communities. For example, it is always asserted that it is our fundamental right of freedom of speech to criticise the Prophet Muhammad—peace be upon him—and the Koran, as we heard earlier from the noble Lord, Lord Pearson, on his crusade. He deliberately took things out of context in your Lordships' House. His reference to the Muslim population was similar to the language used in Germany against the Jewish communities before the war. Yet you may be classified as an extremist if you have supported Palestine or Kashmir.

A number of surveys and studies published in the last few years—again referred to by the noble Lord, Lord Sheikh—revealed that British Muslims feel more patriotic than most British people or their Muslim counterparts living in other parts of Europe. However, the context and manner in which the debate on British values is taking place can be viewed as marginalising Muslims as the "other". Muhammad Abduh, one of the most influential Islamic philosophers and jurists of the modern era, once famously remarked, on his return to Egypt from a tour of Europe:

"I visited the West and saw Islam, but no Muslims; I returned to the East and saw Muslims, but not Islam".

When was the last time David Cameron or Theresa May visited a mosque or a Muslim community centre to reassure British Muslims that they are part of this country, that this is their home and that their contribution will never be eschewed? I know many young British-born Muslims who are now leaving the UK due to this constant demonisation.

Finally, violent extremism must not be ignored. It needs to be rooted out, but we cannot win a war by silencing people. They should be able to hold different views, as long as they do not break the law, and they live in harmony with others. There is a danger that the proposed tougher legislation will have full power to criminalise law-abiding people. What we need as a society is a common language, common principles and dialogue.

9.24 pm

**Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts (Con):** My Lords, it is conventional in your Lordships' House on occasions such as this to open one's remarks with a few comments on the immediately preceding speeches. However, I am conscious that, as the 45th speaker, the House's attention span is beginning to flag so, if I may, I will cut to the chase.

[LORD HODGSON OF ASTLEY ABBOTTS]

In the few minutes available to me, I want to lend my support to those measures in the gracious Speech which the press has loosely grouped under the heading of blue-collar aspiration. I had the pleasure of listening to the noble Lord, Lord Prescott, speak on Radio 4 about the Labour Party's leadership contest. I am sorry that he is not in his place. The noble Lord was rather dismissive of the concept of aspiration—a word bandied about by the candidates—to which he referred, in rather fruitier words than I think would be appropriate to use in your Lordships' House, as being without substance. With due respect to the noble Lord, I disagree with him. Aspiration is a wide-ranging concept. Of course, it has an economic aspect and covers access to the basic support services of our society—health, education, the police and justice—but it also encompasses much less tangible features such as a sense of belonging, a sense of involvement and a sense of community cohesion. These less tangible, less measurable objectives should in my view nevertheless form an important part of the Government's aspiration agenda.

One part of our society that can play a particularly effective role in this regard is the charitable and voluntary sector. Some Members of your Lordships' House will know of my interest in the sector and the reports that I have written for the Government. Therefore, it will not surprise my noble friends on the Front Bench that I am very pleased that the Government are proceeding with the Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Bill. It has the twin objectives of improving the efficacy of the regulatory powers of the Charity Commission, which is very important as a means of encouraging public trust and confidence, and at the same time facilitating the development of what is now called social investment—a new sector in which the UK is the world leader and in which we have a chance to remain so in the future. I look forward very much to the Bill's Second Reading next week.

For the rest of my remarks I return to the issue of social and community cohesion and to what I think will be an immense challenge to it over the next 20 years. As we have heard from the noble Lord, Lord Green, that challenge is the expected increase in the absolute level of the UK population between now and 2035—20 years from now. I make it clear that this is not a speech about immigration. I am fond of remarking that we are all immigrants; the only question is when we got here. I also make it clear that my speech is nothing to do with people's colour, creed or racial origin. I have no interest in that either. However, it is about absolute numbers. I give a couple of statistics. Every day the population of this country goes up by 1,100 people. Every week we are putting a small town or large village on to the map of Britain—every week, 52 weeks a year. This is in a country—England—which has recently overtaken the Netherlands as the most densely populated in Europe. The daily increase consists of 590 excess births over deaths—what is called the natural increase—and 510 from immigration.

I give one simple, specific example concerned with the controversial question of housing, which has featured in many noble Lords' speeches this afternoon, including those made from the Front Benches. In passing, I add my congratulations to the noble Baroness, Lady Smith

of Basildon, on her maiden voyage as leader of her party. In the UK we currently have 2.3 people per dwelling. If we are to house our new population to the same standard, we will need to build 478 dwellings every day. That is one every three minutes, night and day, and without any improvement or increase in our existing housing stock, which I think everybody in your Lordships' House agrees needs some improvement.

I fear that this is not the whole story because between now and 2035, if you take the mid projection of the Office for National Statistics, we will have an additional 8.4 million people. If you apply the same metric to that, we will need to build 183,000 dwellings every year—that is, 3,500 a week, 500 per day or one every three minutes. So for the next 20 years we will have to build a house, dwelling, flat or some form of habitation every three minutes. I find it hard to believe that we will be able to integrate 8.4 million people and build 3.6 million homes without there being significant risks for our social and community cohesion. My concern is that part of our settled population—no matter its colour, creed or background—may well find itself pushed to the margins of our society; “crowded out” is what the sociologists call it.

I will give a very simple example. Football is in the news so I have chosen football as my example. The Premier League is a fantastically successful commercial enterprise. It earns millions around the world for this country. But just 21% of the players in the Premier League are British. Does this matter? Probably not, but it does mean that several hundred young men do not fulfil their dreams and aspirations, and that group of young men will contain a particularly high proportion from the black minority community—a group which I think most people agree needs role models and stories of encouragement, success and participation in our society. That is one simple, small example. I could replicate it if time permitted—it does not—across our society.

In conclusion, I see no easy answers to this issue but I am convinced that it is an issue that needs to be raised, debated and considered in a calm, rational and dispassionate way. If we do not do that, wilder spirits may take over, with results that I am sure no one in this House would wish to see. If I am uncertain about that, I am certain about one thing tonight: when my noble friend comes to wind up, he will take care to ensure that he makes no reference to this part of my speech or indeed the speech of the noble Lord, Lord Green. His officials will tell him, “Don't go there, Minister, there be dragons. You will almost certainly be misreported and quoted out of context. There is no political advantage”. In that sense, his officials are quite right. Demographic policies have very, very long lead times—15, 20, 25 years. So a five-year parliamentary cycle gives every incentive to avoid the whole topic. But in 2035, when we have built those 3.6 million dwellings and I, aged 93, am dribbling into my cornflakes, our succeeding generations may well regret that we did not do more to consider the challenge now.

9.32 pm

**Lord Cameron of Dillington (CB):** My Lords, a lot of the contributions to these debates we hold on the Queen's Speech involve noble Lords getting important

issues off their chests. I am afraid that my contribution today is no exception. But, unusually, I want to talk about something that was actually in the gracious Speech rather than something that I feel should have been in it. I might add that when occasionally I am asked by outsiders why we independent Peers are called Cross-Benchers, I sometimes flippantly remark that it is because sometimes we get very cross. I warn your Lordships that this is one of those occasions.

The issue that I am cross about is the right to buy for housing association tenants. I do not intend to condemn the panic that induced this absurd attack from a Conservative Government on the property rights of some of the most needed and respected charities in this country; nor do I intend to go into detail about why it is so wrong to remove from the sector in perpetuity the main plank of affordable housing in this country, or why it is so wrong to undermine the activities of the people who founded these housing associations—quite often local people who saw a need not being properly addressed by government and set about trying to do something about it, only to find that now the Government, in a panicked electioneering gambit, have chosen to pull the rug from under their feet. Others have spoken about that in these debates, such as the noble Lord, Lord Kerslake, in his excellent maiden speech, the noble Lord, Lord Best, immediately following him, and many others. Therefore, today I wish only to say—to put down a marker, as it were—that while this policy could perhaps be only mildly harmful, although that may be putting it mildly, to urban housing provision, it will have a cataclysmic effect if it is allowed to run rampant in rural areas.

The provision of affordable housing is most critical in rural communities. The affordability gap—the difference between wages and house prices—is worse in the countryside than the towns. Any rural property on the open market is almost always snapped up by outsiders with money and there are almost no homes available for those people we value and on whom rural communities often depend: those whose families have lived there for generations; those who have served on parish councils, hall committees or PCCs; or those who work in local hospitals, social services, shops or the many manufacturing businesses on which the rural economy depends. There will be little likelihood of these families surviving in their villages without some form of housing association housing, and you have to ask how far they will have to go to find alternative affordable housing. It will be very hard for housing associations now to justify building more homes that they know will be unlikely to remain in their ownership for long.

What of the farmers and landowners who gave away their land to housing associations for a peppercorn to make their own contribution to solving one of the greatest problems faced by rural communities today—namely, the lack of affordable housing? Will their generosity be trampled on? Will they ever trust a Tory Government again? What about the communities themselves? Will they continue to support exception sites when their designated purpose of providing affordable homes for locals in perpetuity is overridden by government?

This policy needs rural-proofing. Rural England lost 91,000 affordable homes in the last right-to-buy campaign in the 1980s and rural affordable housing has never managed to replace anything like those numbers since. It was—and remains—a disaster for rural communities so, for the sake of our rural villages, this right to buy must never ever apply to any house, under any circumstances, in communities of under 3,000 people. I may be maligning the Government. Maybe there are already plans afoot to ensure that rural communities do not suffer. Maybe there are other plans afoot to ensure that the rural affordable housing sector grows to meet the desperate need. But until I am reassured, I beg to remain, yours sincerely, a very cross Bencher.

9.36 pm

**Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury (Con):** My Lords, this has been a long debate so the House will be pleased to know that I am the last of the Back-Bench speakers. I want to focus on just one subject in the gracious Speech: the proposal for the northern powerhouse in Greater Manchester. I speak as someone who was born and brought up in Manchester. There are several Mancunians in your Lordships' House and, whatever political differences we may have, we all agree on one point, which is that Manchester is the second city of England.

England is perhaps the most centralised country in Europe, partly because of the centralist instincts of successive Westminster Governments over several decades. This was not always so. The original prosperity of our great cities—Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle and others—was built on strong local leadership, reinforced by a strong civic spirit. Many of our national leaders, such as Joseph Chamberlain and Neville Chamberlain, forged their earlier careers as great civic leaders. Local government today still has many outstanding leaders, some of whom bring that experience into this House, which is one reason why I am so pleased to see my noble friend Lady Williams of Trafford, a former leader of Trafford Council, promoted to ministerial office.

The problem for local government has been caused mainly by the constraints placed on it by central government. There has, in Westminster and Whitehall, been a lack of confidence in local councils so Governments began to sideline local democracy. To generate local enterprise, the Government established Urban Development Corporations in London Docklands and in Liverpool, and enterprise zones. Now we have the innovation—at least within the UK—of directly elected mayors to provide local leadership in cities and city regions. They have a great deal of power. I want to come back to this point shortly.

The proposals for a northern powerhouse build on the collaboration of the 10 councils in the Greater Manchester city region and on the recommendations of the City Growth Commission under the leadership of Jim O'Neill, now my noble friend Lord O'Neill of Gatley. I am delighted that he is now a Treasury Minister. However, the northern powerhouse could not have happened without the vision of my right honourable friend George Osborne.

[LORD SHERBOURNE OF DIDSBURY]

Very briefly, I want to emphasise just a few points. First, the northern powerhouse is coming to fruition because of the co-ordination of the councils and because it has all-party support. Secondly, this is not a zero-sum game. In other words, increased economic growth in one city region should not be at the expense of another city region. Thirdly, the local authorities in Greater Manchester may be the first to come together in this way, but the northern powerhouse will surely be the forerunner of other city regions operating in a similar way.

My final point is that there has to be effective accountability and transparency. Last week, Mr Tony Lloyd became the new mayor of Greater Manchester, but he has not been elected. Not surprisingly, there is concern that this gives him a platform to establish his profile in the two years leading up to the mayoral election. Once elected, the mayor of Greater Manchester will be responsible for billions of pounds of spending and for control over transport and infrastructure, housing, economic development, skills, healthcare and social care. The Government believe that, because the mayor will be the single point of direct accountability, this will ensure strong democracy. I am not sure that this will be enough. Unlike the Greater London Assembly, members of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority will not be directly elected. Yes, the combined authority will establish overview and scrutiny committees, but all the proceedings will need the oxygen of publicity. They must be transparent, open to the media and, above all, open to public scrutiny.

I believe the northern powerhouse will serve the citizens of Greater Manchester well and will be a stimulus to economic growth there. It will, I hope, lead to other city regions following suit.

9.42 pm

**Lord Shipley (LD):** My Lords, first, I declare my vice-presidency of the Local Government Association. I have found this an extremely valuable debate. A number of concerns, affecting a number of Bills, have been clearly identified, and I hope the Government will take steps to listen at a very early stage to all the specific issues that have been raised not only from these Benches but from around the whole Chamber. I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Eden of Winton, on his excellent valedictory speech, and the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Salisbury and the noble Lord, Lord Kerslake, on their excellent maiden speeches.

Like the noble Lord, Lord Kerslake, I pay tribute to the work that local government has done. Despite the reductions in government support, the public give local government high satisfaction ratings. The noble Lord, Lord Kerslake, was right when he warned of the likely impact of future cuts, and he was right to say that the system of distribution of central government grant may need to be revised. The financial situation remains difficult for councils. Given that the Government are committed to no increases in income tax, VAT or national insurance, and also to the protection of some budget areas from cuts, this is going to make life very difficult for local government. We have to have a discussion about that. That is also why encouraging fiscal devolution is so important, so that local authorities

can raise more of their own money and reduce duplication in public services at a local level, and thus generate significant efficiency savings. The Local Government Association has demonstrated in its publications how some of this can be achieved.

I echo previous comments in wishing the new Secretary of State success in his new role. I worked with him for almost three years on city deals and local growth deals and I know that his drive—along with that of others—has got us to the position on devolution within England that we have reached today.

In the few moments I have, I want to concentrate on two matters: first, devolution within England; and, secondly, the urgent need to build more homes. The two are related because local government could build more if it had the powers to do so. I welcome the devolution agreements that have taken place and the creation of the several combined authorities under the 2009 Act as steps in the right direction. Five years ago, it would have been hard to think that there would be such a sea change in the location of power within England. We now need counties to follow, and I welcome the recent indication from the Secretary of State that progress will be made on this—I hope within the next few months. Even though my party is not now in government, we shall offer constructive opposition that enables the broad thrust of government policy on devolution to be progressed.

I have two questions on the housing Bill. Despite a lot of reading and listening to your Lordships' debate today, I am still unclear about what net increase in homes the Government plan to deliver in the course of the next five years. Secondly, what are the Government's plans to build affordable homes in the quantities we need? Last week I read two figures in national newspapers—first, that the Government plan to build 150,000 houses a year by 2020, but also that they plan to build 200,000 a year by 2020. Whichever it is, both figures are actually under the rate at which new housing is needed.

Several contributions in this debate have demonstrated that there are serious problems with the proposal to sell off housing association homes. It is hard to see how the one-for-one replacement policy could work, given the failure over so many years to replace council housing stock. Why are the discounts proposed so high, with discounts of up to £104,000 in London and £77,000 elsewhere? Is the National Housing Federation right when it says that this policy will cost over £5 billion? What assessment have the Government done on the cost? Finally, can the Minister assure the House that assets of registered providers, which have mostly been publicly funded, will not be sold off without the taxpayer getting their money back? Those are my questions, and around your Lordships' House there have been a range of other questions in relation to this Bill. Urgent discussions are needed to assess the viability of the proposals as they stand within the housing Bill.

We have heard a bit about the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, of which we take Second Reading here in your Lordships' House on Monday. The speed of progress on devolution is good to see, but we must not make mistakes. We must connect the whole structure, not just the metro mayor, with the ballot box. There have been a huge number of reports



over recent years on the benefits of devolution for a whole range of bodies, and they all point in the same direction—that you can drive growth faster and join up public service delivery through devolution, as well as making government more responsive to the needs of local people.

There are four issues, and one relates to the point raised by the noble Lord, Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury, about the northern powerhouse. In his announcement on 14 May on this matter, the Chancellor said that the northern powerhouse covered the whole of the north of England—that it was not just Manchester, nor was it just Man-Shef-Leeds-Pool. But we need some clarity in government and in the north of England about what is meant, first, by “the north” and, secondly, by “powerhouse”. Indeed, I noted that my noble friend Lord Greaves has a Question for Written Answer on the Order Paper to be answered by 11 June on these very points, and the position may become clearer then.

I accept that we have to start somewhere with connecting new structures with the ballot box, and metro mayors are a start. I am slightly uncomfortable about the fact that for two years Greater Manchester will have a metro mayor who has not been elected by popular ballot. We need to be much clearer about governance and about who has what responsibilities and what powers, whether it is the mayor, the mayor's officers, political advisers, council leaders, or whole councils and opposition parties. We need to know the powers that will leave or remain with local government and the powers that will leave or remain in Whitehall. We need to understand better the powers to precept by a mayoral combined authority and how those powers will operate in practice.

The combined authorities in the 2009 Act have responsibilities for economic development, regeneration and transport across a functional economic area. To that list can be added social care, healthcare, skills, police, housing and strategic planning. I am concerned that there is an assumption that one person can handle all those things, because I doubt that they can. I share the concerns expressed a moment ago by the noble Lord, Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury. Although an assembly for Greater Manchester has been ruled out, at least for the time being, I am not sure that that will stand the test of time.

We need to look at the voting systems for local government. I agree entirely with the point made by my noble friend Lord Tyler about the need for proportional representation in local government, and we need to look more closely at whether the supplementary vote system is right for the election of a metro mayor.

I finish as we started today from these Benches. It has been a very sad day for all of us in politics with the loss of Charles Kennedy. He was a very good friend to so many of us, and we shall miss him.

**Noble Lords:** Hear, hear.

9.52 pm

**Lord McKenzie of Luton (Lab):** My Lords, I begin by sending best wishes from these Benches to the noble Lord, Lord Eden, and our congratulations to the maiden speakers today, the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Salisbury and the noble Lord, Lord Kerslake. I also

congratulate the two Ministers who have, I think, both been promoted since the previous Parliament. I should mention the noble Lord, Lord Wakeham, given his earlier experience. He is on the record and has got a name check this evening. I promise to continue to do that so long as he does not keep banging on about the 1992 election in which I was a candidate. It would be very helpful.

This has been a wide-ranging debate covering a number of important policy areas. I propose to refer to just some of them. We are asked to accept that the context is a programme which backs working people, is about social justice and brings our country together, but assertion and repetition do not make that a reality. In her opening speech from these Benches, my noble friend and leader Lady Smith of Basildon touched upon measures in the Queen's Speech which address the most serious issues facing our country about how we protect our security, liberty and democracy. She probed, as did other noble Lords, particularly my noble friend Lady Henig, the consequences for neighbourhood policing and, indeed, our national security of cutting the number of police officers and, given the pressures and influences which face many young people today, the importance of maintaining that community work which helps tackle extremism and encourages young people away from that path. That is an issue which exercised many noble Lords in today's debate. My noble friend gave our support to the measures to tackle illegal immigration and to deport foreign criminals, and expressed concern about the lack of new measures to make it illegal to exploit migrant labour to undercut local wages and jobs.

Like many other noble Lords, my noble friend spoke about housing. That we have a housing crisis in our country cannot be denied. While there was a welcome spurt in the number of housing starts at the beginning of this year, experts express concern about whether it is sustainable. Even if it was, some 40,000 per quarter still falls well short of the new homes that we need each year to keep pace with population changes, let alone tackle the housing backlog. We are simply not building enough new homes and have not done so for a considerable time. The prospect of owning or renting a home on affordable terms receded under the previous Government, despite a plethora of initiatives that provided the lowest level of housebuilding in peacetime since the 1920s, where the number of homes built for social rent ended at the lowest rate in more than 20 years. With more families having to look to the private rented sector, with rents rising, benefits being cut and evictions rising, it is hard to see the thread of social justice weaving through housing policy. Indeed, we see rough sleeping reaching the very doors of Parliament. It is in this context that the new Government's policies must be judged.

In this regard, we have been considerably advantaged by the maiden speech of the noble Lord, Lord Kerslake, who brings particular expertise on the subject, which adds to the powerful contributions that we have come to expect from the noble Lord, Lord Best, and my noble friends Lady Hollis and Lady Warwick. A number of noble Lords added their voices; the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, in particular is angry about the cataclysmic effect of the proposals for the right to buy on rural areas.

[LORD MCKENZIE OF LUTON]

Many have raised concerns about the extension of the right to buy to housing association tenants on a number of counts. Given the ability of housing associations to invest in new social housing, and given that that is dependent in part on borrowing against existing stock, how does this help to meet housing need? How is it consistent with charity law? Funding the discount and the cost of replacement housing from the sale of higher-value council houses is clearly fraught with difficulties on a number of fronts. It contributes to the depletion of social housing and widens divisions between where richer and poorer households are located.

The Government have promised that every home sold under the proposals will be replaced on a one-for-one basis with another affordable home. However, we are not encouraged by the delivery of an equivalent commitment when discounts for council houses were widened: the LGA reports that this has delivered fewer than half the homes that it should. So we need to be convinced that the policy will not lead to a diminution of affordable housing. In short, we need answers to the questions posed by many noble Lords in this debate, particularly the 10 questions posed by my noble friend Lady Hollis.

The Chancellor has waxed lyrical of late about a “northern powerhouse”, about the economic potential of the great cities of the north of England, about how size matters and about connectivity, although this rhetoric has actually run ahead of the reality: so far the northern powerhouse is just one agreement with Greater Manchester, albeit an important one. It is somewhat ironic that having been part of a Government who—with a little help from the Liberal Democrats—battered local authorities for most of the last five years, this Administration are now seriously turning to the public sector to boost local growth in England.

Local government has had its resources reduced by some 40%, with more to come, as we hear from my noble friend Lord Beecham and the noble Lord, Lord Shipley. It has been the biggest hit in the public sector, and in a manner that hits the poorest areas the most. Despite assertions of localism, on too many occasions the previous Government demonstrated that they were not prepared to trust local government, a point that the noble Lord, Lord Sherbourne, made—not on planning, finance or even the minutiae of parking arrangements or waste disposal—and they had a habit of passing responsibilities to local government without the money, council tax support and aspects of the old social fund being just two examples. As my noble friend Lord Beecham set out, devolution arrangements must be predicated on fair funding. Therefore there is a degree of suspicion about intent, although we should acknowledge that there has been some devolution in the form of city deals and growth deals, and the current Bill presages the introduction of further powers for combined authorities and other areas.

Just as local government has already demonstrated its ability to cope with savage budget cuts, it has shown a willingness to engage in innovative ways and step up to the plate. Manchester, the one example where the 10 authorities have a long history of collaboration characterised by consistent leadership and hard work

over many years, is a prime example. Its agreement with the Government encompasses being a co-commissioner of the next phase of the Work Programme, as well as devolution of the current funding and decision-making for health and social care within Greater Manchester.

We support devolution but believe that it should be part of a UK-wide plan, not a series of one-off deals with the Chancellor and not just limited to great cities or just one great city, but should include the rural areas—a point proved by the noble Lord, Lord Curry. Our work on the Bill will seek to ensure that no area is left behind. The LGA in particular enthuses about the economic benefits of devolution and the benefits of decision-making at local level, but not limiting that to metropolitan areas. It points out that non-metropolitan England accounts for 56% of economic output.

The published legislation is drawn in very broad terms, with significant powers for the Secretary of State to agree to transfer to a combined authority, functions of local authorities, other local public services and powers devolved from Government—much wider powers than can currently be conferred under the 2009 Act. However, we know that any deal will depend upon the councils agreeing to have an elected mayor. There is no requirement for a referendum to determine whether the public want one, and once signed up to it, there is no going back. The Secretary of State can by order require that any function which is a function of a combined authority can be exercisable only by the mayor. With the consent of appropriate authorities this can include the role of the police and crime commissioner. I do not want to disappoint my noble friend Lady Henig, but I doubt whether that will be a route to having an increased precept to help with the underfunding of our police services. Therefore there is potentially a very significant concentration of power under these proposals, but we need to be clear that having only one acceptable governance model—the elected mayor—is not a barrier to devolution.

We support the devolution and integration of health and care services but need to be satisfied about whether the model can be imposed on areas and whether it requires another structural upheaval. We particularly do not want to see devolution of responsibilities without proper funding again, passing the buck of the tough decisions to local authorities without the security of the funding to go with it.

So far as the energy Bill is concerned, I should just say that we welcome the creation of the Oil and Gas Authority and will continue to scrutinise the Government to ensure that the UK gets the maximum economic benefit from our oil and gas reserves. As for onshore wind farms, we consider the Government's lack of support to be short-sighted and lacking commitment to climate change. Of course we need to be sensitive about the siting of such facilities, but we should acknowledge that they provide the most developed form of clean energy that is available.

The election result has not cast my party in the role it had hoped for, so our focus must remain on scrutinising, challenging, and holding the Government to account, and to be a voice for those who would otherwise not be heard. Taking this programme overall, it will be much needed.

10.03 pm

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Lord Bates)**

**(Con):** My Lords, this has been a incredible debate of some 49 speakers already, and I am very mindful of what will now become known as the Whitehall doctrine, announced by my noble friend Lord Wakeham, that it does not matter so much what you say, just that you have to name-check everybody on the way through. Given that there were 49 speeches, I am not sure that I can squeeze all that into the 15 minutes or so we have left.

My noble friend Lady Williams of Trafford set out clearly and in some detail the eight Bills in the gracious Speech that we have discussed today, so I will deal with the contributions that were made and try to group them thematically.

I begin by paying tribute to Charles Kennedy and express my condolences on behalf of the Government for the loss of such a talent. As the noble Lord, Lord Paddick, and many others have said, he was a man of immense courage. The noble Lord, Lord Tyler, gave us a moving recollection, and my noble friend Lord Blencathra also spoke about him. Charles Kennedy dispelled the myth of the dour Scot once and for all. Probably above all, he had that great elixir of political life that we strive for but few of us ever have: the ability to connect. He had that in spades, and he will be missed.

My noble friend Lord Eden of Winton made an outstanding valedictory speech. I was struck by the breadth of time it dealt with. He said that when he first entered Parliament, he served under Churchill; that is quite an amazing stretch. One thing that this House does more than anything else is to provide human bridges to history, and here, in one life, we see someone who served in the Second World War and in Administrations stretching from Churchill to Thatcher; someone who has been a dedicated public servant for some 61 years. We can only feel incredibly humble in the face of such public service and commitment.

However, what I noticed more than anything else about the speech of my noble friend is that, when he recounted his life and times and his hopes for the future—we wish him well—he chose to dwell in his closing comments on the people who served in the Bishops' Bar and in the Tea Room: the people of this House who contribute so much to our lives, day in, day out, behind the scenes. Again—almost in the spirit of Charles Kennedy—he made a connection to them, and to us. He has been an outstanding public servant. I remember a great teacher telling me that the journey of life is all about the path that moves from selfishness to selflessness. My noble friend's life is a worthy example of that aspiration.

Looking for a segue into today's first maiden speech, I notice that my noble friend's predecessor in Bournemouth West was the then Marquess of Salisbury—which brings us to the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Salisbury. I cannot promise to do the same thing with the maiden speech of the noble Lord, Lord Kerslake, but I am trying. The right reverend Prelate spoke about humanity and the importance of caring for the whole community, which we very much aspire to do. We seek to address the misconceptions that the noble

Lord, Lord Patel, referred to. The right reverend Prelate also referred to his copy of the Magna Carta. We have one thing in common. I looked on the website and discovered that on 14 June he will be leading a Magna Carta pilgrimage around the close at Salisbury, which is a wonderful place. On that very day, I shall be setting off from Runnymede to walk—not run—to Westminster, as a pilgrimage in honour of that great document, which is a cornerstone of our democracy. My partner as I walk will be the Member of Parliament for Salisbury. The right reverend Prelate is a great addition to this House and we welcome him very much.

I turn to the noble Lord, Lord Kerslake. I was particularly struck when he talked about the qualities of Greg Clark, with whom he has worked very closely. Those of us who have had the privilege of working with him know him to be a man of great intelligence and great humanity and with a great mind for detail. We are all thrilled to see that the work which he was so instrumental in shaping—the city deals and growth deals, and the work which came up through the DCLG and the Home Office—will be carried on in the hands of a growing representation of northern Ministers at the DCLG and the Treasury: Greg Clark, James Wharton and my noble friends Lady Williams and Lord O'Neill, as well as, of course, George Osborne. That bodes very well for the future.

I was wondering whether at this point I ought to offer congratulations to the noble Duke, the Duke of Somerset, on his maiden speech, but of course it was not a maiden speech as he is returning to us, albeit after a gap of some 15 or 16 years. However, he is very welcome and we appreciated his contribution.

I also pay tribute to the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, for her outstanding opening speech. It was a tour de force, principally on her accession to the very weighty responsibility of being Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition in your Lordships' House—a role for which she is very well equipped and has served an incredible apprenticeship. We have both been through quite an apprenticeship. She will do that job tremendously well and we recognise the importance of the role. We were also struck on this side by the indication that she gave of her style. She said that it is not about numbers but about the constitution—that Her Majesty's Opposition recognise the manifesto and the commitments in it but that their duty is to provide detailed scrutiny of government legislation. That I know, and I bear the scars from her doing so phenomenally well on many Bills in the previous Session, as I know she will do again this time.

The noble Lord, Lord Paddick, spoke in his opening remarks about being unshackled from the Government. I thought that was a little bit strong. Although he may have felt that, it did not feel quite that way to us. I say to noble Lords on the Liberal Democrat Benches that we can reflect on some real progress that was made during our time in the coalition Government, not just in the economy but in areas such as modern-day slavery and it being the first time that a Government delivered 0.7% in aid, 2 million jobs and the pupil premium. There is a lot that we can rightly be proud of and I hope that, although they have drifted physically to the other side, they recognise that in many areas,

[LORD BATES]

certainly on this side of the House, we recognise the contribution that they made to shaping the recovery that we have. However, I am sure that they will want to make their particular identity known more clearly as they join the Opposition.

I shall deal, first, with the housing issues, which were raised by a number of noble Lords, not least by the noble Lord, Lord Kerslake, in his maiden speech, but also by the noble Earl, Lord Lytton, and the noble Baroness, Lady Hollis. She had a list of 10 questions but let it be known through the usual channels that she was not anticipating that I would answer all 10 of them. Because she has dealt with me before, she knows that I am probably not capable of answering them all, and therefore a magical reply will be delivered to her. Housing was also mentioned by the noble Lords, Lord Greaves and Lord Best, and I shall come to some of those specific points.

We have to bear in mind that this is part of a package approach. We are looking not just at the right to buy: 630,000 tenants living in housing associations already enjoy higher discounts under the preserved right to buy, and 800,000 have the right to acquire but with lower discounts. A further 500,000 have no purchase rights at all. In that regard, this is about introducing equality of treatment. The noble Baroness, Lady Hollis, is heckling me, but if she will bear with me, I will try to make the point.

In putting this forward, we recognise and believe that there is something quite fundamental in people having the ability to take a stake in society through owning a home. Nobody has mentioned it in the debate but, coming as I do from the north-east of England, I have seen scores of times, if not hundreds, how the ability to buy their own home is a route to social mobility that many families crave and few actually have. We ought not to underestimate the value of that to many people in this country. We talk about social mobility; it starts with people being able to take a stake in society and have a home of their own, which they can draw an income from in retirement and pass on to their children, should they so wish. That is a fundamental principle that we want to protect.

It is not just about social tenants. It is also about the Help to Buy scheme, the Help to Buy mortgage guarantee scheme and the Help to Buy NewBuy scheme.

We are committed to building 275,000 affordable houses in the social sector, of which 200,000 will be starter homes for people aged under 40 who can take advantage of that. On the detail of how this will work, particularly in rural areas, Ministers and senior officials are already engaging with the housing sector and other interested parties to draw up how this will operate in practice. I know that a great deal of attention will be given to that, and at Second Reading and in Committee there will be opportunities to tease that out in further detail. However, this is all about trying to address that housing crisis and give people a stake in society.

We recognise the particular challenges in rural areas. A decision on what will apply in relation to the extended right to buy—something that was asked about by my noble friend Lady Byford, the noble Baroness, Lady

Bakewell, and the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington—will be produced, after consultation, in due course.

On the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, the noble Lord, Lord McKenzie, said it is important that it is not a one-size-fits-all Bill. That is absolutely right. The noble Lord, Lord Beecham, was critical of the proposal. However, nobody is imposing this. We are not saying that it is something that every local authority must have. We are presenting local authorities with an opportunity to take advantage of greater powers. However, as my noble friend Lord Sherbourne and the noble Lord, Lord Shipley, mentioned, if there are greater powers, they must be accountable. That is the reason for the assistance of the mayor if the full package of powers is taken forward. This is something that many local authorities will want to take advantage of because it is a way of delivering better services for local communities. That was mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Kerslake, in his opening remarks and is something of which we are absolutely convinced.

The Psychoactive Substances Bill was touched on by a number of Members, including the noble Baroness, Lady Hamwee, and the noble Baroness, Lady Meacher. As the noble Lord, Lord Mackenzie of Framwellgate, mentioned, for a long time now we have been trying to play catch-up with the drug manufacturers and distributors. By changing slightly the chemical composition of various psychoactive substances, they seek to escape the law. This is not a radical knee-jerk measure that we have arrived at. It is being looked at by the Home Office multidisciplinary expert panel, which reported in September 2014. A similar panel reported in Scotland, and the Welsh Health and Social Care Committee looked at this as well. They all came out in favour of a blanket ban. I recognise that the noble Baroness, Lady Meacher, has done some research on this subject in the all-party group, and we will look at her report as well.

On the investigatory powers Bill, which will come before your Lordships' House, the report of the Joint Committee on the draft communications data Bill chaired by my noble friend Lord Blencathra will be part of the package that is made available, and rightly so. The report was much debated during the passage of the counterterrorism Bill and is an important piece of research that has already shaped the Government's approach. We have said that we accept the vast majority of the recommendations put forward.

My noble friend Lady Newlove spoke about the importance of keeping victims at the centre of our considerations, which we commit to do. I know that the noble Viscount, Lord Simon, spoke about victims as well.

Conscious of my time being almost up, let me say that a number of points were raised on the issue of extremism and it is important that I put some remarks on the record. British Muslims make an enormous contribution to British society. They suffer serious harm from extremism and must be seen in this approach as being among the victims. I am delighted that I am now joined in the Home Office by my noble friend Lord Ahmad as a Minister. He will be leading through the extremism Bill. His experience, knowledge and sensitivity will be invaluable. I think that someone asked, "When was the last time the Prime Minister

actually went to a mosque?”. Well, that was with my noble friend; certainly the Home Secretary was with my noble friend in doing that just a few weeks ago.

However, at the same time we should not be backward in asserting very clearly what British values are and that we expect people who have the privilege of living in this wonderful country to adhere to those values of tolerance, of openness and of respect for the rule of law and democracy. These things are an intrinsic part of who we are. We should not in any way be backward in saying what those elements are that we believe in, because to be so would leave a vacuum into which extremism flows.

The investigatory powers Bill will be subject to extensive scrutiny. We have said that there will be an additional layer of scrutiny. We await David Anderson's report about the terrorism legislation and interceptions of communications data, which was a matter raised by a number of noble Lords; the noble Lord, Lord Strasburger, referred to it as being very important. We will await that report and deal with it, but not in a knee-jerk way—my noble friend Lady Fookes rightly castigated us for sometimes reacting in a knee-jerk way—but in a careful and steady way. It is something that we need to look at.

There were many contributions about the rural economy, and we are of course committed to maintaining it. We are aware of the pressures, to which my noble friend Lord Plumb referred, on the industry, particularly the dairy industry, at this time and the importance of the environment to it.

As to immigration targets, my noble friend Lord Hodgson assured me that I would never get a box note

from my officials saying anything about immigration and the pressure that it puts on public services. To prove my noble friend wrong, a box note has arrived saying that uncontrolled immigration makes it difficult to maintain social cohesion, puts pressure on public services and can drive down wages for people on low incomes. It also leads to pressure on other public services, such as housing, the health service and education, and that is part of the reason why we are taking the approaches that we are: to seek to reduce it as part of improving social cohesion.

In the Bills and proposals that are being brought forward, there is a coherent plan for working families in this country. They seek to enable them to have a home of their own and to aspire to having the skills they need to make a contribution to our society. They enable us to be assertive about what British values are and the importance of people who live in and come to this country adhering to them. They are about being robust about our British values, about investing in our housing stock and energy, about building the northern powerhouse in the north of England, about improving social mobility, about improving the economy, and about keeping our borders safe.

I thank again all those who have participated in the debate. I apologise to noble Lords who spoke on the issue of renewable energy. I was not able to address their concerns as fully as I would have liked, but given the hour I will draw my remarks to a close on that point.

*Debate adjourned until tomorrow.*

*House adjourned at 10.26 pm.*





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