

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT  
GENERAL COMMITTEES

Public Bill Committee

## PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES (AMENDMENT) BILL

*Seventeenth Sitting*

*Wednesday 31 October 2018*

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Motion to adjourn considered.

Adjourned till Wednesday 14 November at Ten o'clock.

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**Sunday 4 November 2018**

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**The Committee consisted of the following Members:***Chairs:* †Ms NADINE DORRIES, ALBERT OWEN

Allan, Lucy ( <i>Telford</i> ) (Con)	Mills, Nigel ( <i>Amber Valley</i> ) (Con)
Bone, Mr Peter ( <i>Wellingborough</i> ) (Con)	† Norris, Alex ( <i>Nottingham North</i> ) (Lab/Co-op)
Charalambous, Bambos ( <i>Enfield, Southgate</i> ) (Lab)	Paisley, Ian ( <i>North Antrim</i> ) (Ind)
Fletcher, Colleen ( <i>Coventry North East</i> ) (Lab)	† Smith, Chloe ( <i>Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office</i> )
† Foster, Kevin ( <i>Torbay</i> ) (Con)	Stewart, Bob ( <i>Beckenham</i> ) (Con)
Harper, Mr Mark ( <i>Forest of Dean</i> ) (Con)	Wiggin, Bill ( <i>North Herefordshire</i> ) (Con)
† Khan, Afzal ( <i>Manchester, Gorton</i> ) (Lab)	
Lee, Karen ( <i>Lincoln</i> ) (Lab)	Adam Mellows-Facer, <i>Committee Clerk</i>
† Linden, David ( <i>Glasgow East</i> ) (SNP)	
† Matheson, Christian ( <i>City of Chester</i> ) (Lab)	† <b>attended the Committee</b>

## Public Bill Committee

Wednesday 31 October 2018

[MS NADINE DORRIES *in the Chair*]

### Parliamentary Constituencies (Amendment) Bill

10 am

**The Chair:** Before we begin, I remind the Committee that electronic devices should be switched to silent. Tea and coffee are not allowed during sittings. As the Committee cannot consider the clauses of the Bill until the House has agreed to a money resolution, I call Afzal Khan to move that the Committee do now adjourn.

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

I hope that all colleagues saw the success of the private Members' Bills on Friday. By my count, three Bills successfully cleared all their Commons stages: the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Bill; the Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths (Registration Etc.) Bill; and the Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill. I commend the Members who worked on those Bills and brought them forward, but I cannot help but feel frustrated that so many Bills that were supposedly behind mine in the queue have leapfrogged, almost becoming law, while we are still in Committee. It shows that the hold-up with my Bill is an intentional delaying tactic by the Government. There is no reason why we could not have been granted a money resolution and have finished the Commons stages by now.

The Government are abusing the parliamentary process. Private Members' Bills were designed as a way for Back Benchers and Opposition MPs to change the law. The point of them is that a measure might not have the support of the Government, but it might have the support of the House and the public, and so it should become law. I believe this is the case with my Bill, and I hope the Government will respect the will of Parliament and let my Bill progress. If the Government do not agree with my Bill, they should vote it down on the Floor of the House—that is the right way of dealing with business in the House.

**Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab): It is a great pleasure to see you back in the Chair, Ms Dorries, and I will not detain you or the Committee for very long this morning, save to echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton about private Members' Bills, which were considered after Second Reading of his Bill, jumping the queue.

I have to say that this is not a British way of doing things. We queue in this country, and we take our fair turn. We take our fair turn even in Torbay, and we do things in the right order. It is discourteous not to follow a fair order and not to treat things fairly. It is discourteous not just to my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton, but to every hon. Member in this House who would seek to use the private Member's Bill system to

change the law or to have an effect on the democracy of our country. It is therefore discourteous to the whole House.

I say once again to the Minister that the absurdity of the situation will damage the reputation of the Government, but it will also damage the reputation of this House. At some point, when the House's reputation is brought into disrepute, I hope that the House itself will make its own judgment on the Government's actions in failing to bring forward the money resolution in fair time. It is clear to me now, and I think it is becoming even clearer—to hon. Members of all parties—that the delay is entirely politically motivated and flies in the face of the democratic decision taken on Second Reading. The longer it goes on, the greater the damage will be to the reputation of Parliament. I urge the Minister to bear that in mind as she considers whether to speak to colleagues about introducing a money resolution, so that we can get on with what the House asked us to get on with.

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): It is a great pleasure to see you in the Chair, Ms Dorries, for what I believe is now our 17th episode of "I'm in a Public Bill Committee...Get Me Out Of Here!" I had quite a number of people from Glasgow visiting Parliament over the last couple of weeks, including some people earlier in the week. I took them round, gave them a tour and explained how Parliament works or, as is so often the case, does not work.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton said, it was great to see the three private Members' Bills progress on Friday. I found myself being lobbied by some constituents to speak in the Representation of the People (Young People's Enfranchisement and Education) Bill debate last Friday, and I had to break it to them rather gently that that Bill would not be voted on, and that it would not even be debated. I am now having a conversation with constituents about how private Members' Bills actually work.

I refer hon. Members to page 23 of today's Order Paper—we know that the next Friday sitting will be on 23 November, when we will debate the Stalking Protection Bill and the Parking (Code of Practice) Bill, which is almost certainly as far as we will get. However, because of the absolute nonsense that is the private Member's Bill system, there is also the Voter Registration Bill, the Student Loans (Debt Interest) Bill, the Border Control Bill, the Green Belt (Protection) Bill, the Local Audit (Public Access to Documents) Bill, and I could go on for several pages and mention the 150 or so Bills listed on the Order Paper—it is amazing—none of which will see the light of day.

**The Chair:** Please do not, Mr Linden.

**David Linden:** The point is that the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton, was a lot further up the queue than that lot and is being held back. The House voted to give the Bill a Second Reading, and it commanded that the Bill come into Committee. We have now met on 17 occasions and got no further. Some of the Bills on the Order Paper have not even been printed yet. My hon. Friend has had the good grace to draft his Bill, and the House has commanded that it come to Committee for line-by-line scrutiny.

**Christian Matheson:** My hon. Friend is right: my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton had the good grace to draft the Bill. We must bear in mind that he also had the good grace to listen to representations from hon. Members from across the House and temper the Bill's original proposals, so he has a record of listening to hon. Members and taking their suggestions on board.

**David Linden:** My hon. Friend is spot on. I remember speaking—in the distant past—on Second Reading in December 2017, as a young, fresh-faced MP. I will leave it to the Committee to judge how I have fared since. I remember making it clear during that debate—back when we could talk about the substance of the Bill—that I wanted to see the Bill amended in certain areas. I wanted the number of constituencies to be protected, as is the case in Northern Ireland, and I wanted us to consider the electoral quota again, but we have come so far down the path of parliamentary procedure and game playing from the Government, that we are unable to talk about the substance of the Bill.

I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton, is reasonable and wants to listen to colleagues. If the Government gave the Bill a money resolution, they would not necessarily need to allow it to progress. All we ask them to do is give it a money resolution so that we can discuss its contents. My hon. Friend is an entirely reasonable individual who will take on board the opinions of Committee members, who are dwindling. The number of Conservative Members on the Committee who have shown up either just once or not at all is a gross discourtesy to the House.

With that, I will leave my comments for this week. Hopefully, when we return for the 18th episode of this charade, we might make some progress.

*Question put and agreed to.*

10.8 am

*Adjourned till Wednesday 14 November at Ten o'clock.*





