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Tuesday
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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

OFFICIAL REPORT

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The following abbreviations are used to show a Member's party affiliation:

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

No party affiliation is given for Members serving the House in a formal capacity or for the Lords spiritual.

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HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

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The Rt Hon. Rishi Sunak, MP

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER AND SECRETARY OF STATE, CABINET OFFICE—
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The Rt Hon. Michael Gove, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE—The Rt Hon. Steve Barclay, MP

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LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS AND LORD PRIVY SEAL—The Rt Hon. Lord True, CBE

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EQUALITIES—The Rt Hon. Kemi Badenoch, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO—The Rt Hon. Claire Coutinho, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS—The Rt Hon. Dr Thérèse Coffey, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WORK AND PENSIONS—The Rt Hon. Mel Stride, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION—The Rt Hon. Gillian Keegan, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt Hon. Mark Harper, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT—The Rt Hon. Lucy Frazer, KC, MP

MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO—The Rt Hon. Greg Hands, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt Hon. Chris Heaton-Harris, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt Hon. Alister Jack, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt Hon. David T.C. Davies, MP

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PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY AND CHIEF WHIP—The Rt Hon. Simon Hart, MP

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ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt Hon. Victoria Prentis, KC, MP

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MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION—The Rt Hon. Robert Jenrick, MP

MINISTER FOR SECURITY—The Rt Hon. Tom Tugendhat, MBE, VR, MP

MINISTER FOR DEVELOPMENT AND AFRICA—The Rt Hon. Andrew Mitchell, MP

MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS—The Rt Hon. Johnny Mercer, MP

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MINISTERS OF STATE—

Nusrat Ghani, MP (Minister for Industry and Economic Security) §

The Earl of Minto (Minister for Regulatory Reform)

Nigel Huddleston, MP (Minister for International Trade)

Lord Johnson of Lainston (Minister for Investment)

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Kevin Hollinrake, MP (Minister for Enterprise, Markets and Small Business)

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 Baroness Neville-Rolfe, DBE, CMG
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 Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay (Minister for Arts and Heritage)

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 The Rt Hon. Andrew Mitchell, MP (Minister for Development and Africa)
 The Rt Hon. Anne-Marie Trevelyan, MP (Minister for Indo-Pacific)

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 Helen Whatley, MP (Minister for Social Care)

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Levelling Up, Housing and Communities—

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 Lord Harlech
 Lord Evans of Rainow
 Lord Caine
 Lord Mott
 BARONESS IN WAITING—Baroness Swinburne

§ *Members of the Government listed under more than one department*

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THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

IN THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
COMMENCING ON THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF DECEMBER IN THE
SIXTY EIGHTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF

HER LATE MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

FIFTH SERIES

VOLUME DCCCXXXIV

FIRST VOLUME OF SESSION 2023-24

House of Lords

Tuesday 7 November 2023

King's Speech

11.30 am

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

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

“My Lords and Members of the House of Commons, it is mindful of the legacy of service and devotion to this country set by My beloved Mother, The late Queen, that I deliver this, the first King's Speech in over 70 years. The impact of Covid and the war in Ukraine have created significant long-term challenges for the United Kingdom. That is why my Government's priority is to make the difficult but necessary long-term decisions to change this country for the better.

My Ministers' focus is on increasing economic growth and safeguarding the health and security of the British people for generations to come.

My Government will continue to take action to bring down inflation, to ease the cost of living for families and help businesses fund new jobs and investment.

My Ministers will support the Bank of England to return inflation to target by taking responsible decisions on spending and borrowing. These decisions will help household finances, reduce public sector debt, and safeguard the financial security of the country.

Legislation will be introduced to strengthen the United Kingdom's energy security, and reduce reliance on volatile international energy markets and hostile foreign regimes. This Bill will support the future licensing

of new oil and gas fields, helping the country to transition to net zero by 2050 without adding undue burdens on households.

Alongside this, my Ministers will seek to attract record levels of investment in renewable energy sources and reform grid connections, building on the United Kingdom's track-record of decarbonising faster than other G7 economies.

My Government will invest in Network North to deliver faster and more reliable journeys between, and within, the cities and towns of the North and Midlands, prioritising improving the journeys that people make most often.

My Ministers will strengthen education for the long term. Steps will be taken to ensure young people have the knowledge and skills to succeed, through the introduction of the Advanced British Standard that will bring technical and academic routes into a single qualification. Proposals will be implemented to reduce the number of young people studying poor quality university degrees and increase the number undertaking high quality apprenticeships.

My Ministers will take steps to make the economy more competitive, taking advantage of freedoms afforded by the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union. A bill will be brought forward to promote trade and investment with economies in the fastest growing region in the world. My Ministers will continue to negotiate trade agreements with dynamic economies, delivering jobs and growth in the United Kingdom.

My Ministers will introduce new legal frameworks to support the safe commercial development of emerging industries, such as self-driving vehicles, introduce new competition rules for digital markets, and encourage innovation in technologies such as machine learning. Legislation will be brought forward to support the creative industries and protect public interest journalism. Proposals will be published to reform welfare and support more people into work.

My Government will promote the integrity of the Union and strengthen the social fabric of the United Kingdom.

Working with NHS England, my Government will deliver its plans to cut waiting lists and transform the long-term workforce of the National Health Service. This will include delivering on the NHS workforce plan, the first long-term plan to train the doctors and nurses the country needs, and minimum service levels to prevent strikes from undermining patient safety. Record levels of investment are expanding and transforming mental health services to ensure more people can access the support they need. My Government will introduce legislation to create a smokefree generation by restricting the sale of tobacco so that children currently aged fourteen or younger can never be sold cigarettes, and restricting the sale and marketing of e-cigarettes to children.

My Ministers will bring forward a bill to reform the housing market by making it cheaper and easier for leaseholders to purchase their freehold and tackling the exploitation of millions of homeowners through punitive service charges. Renters will benefit from stronger security of tenure and better value, while landlords will benefit from reforms to provide certainty that they can regain their properties when needed.

My Government will deliver a long-term plan to regenerate towns and put local people in control of their future. Legislation will be brought forward to safeguard the future of football clubs for the benefit of communities and fans. A bill will be introduced to deal with the scourge of unlicensed pedicabs in London.

My Government is committed to tackling antisemitism and ensuring that the Holocaust is never forgotten. A bill will progress the construction of a national Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre in Victoria Tower Gardens.

My Government will act to keep communities safe from crime, anti-social behaviour, terrorism and illegal migration.

A bill will be brought forward to ensure tougher sentences for the most serious offenders and increase the confidence of victims. My Ministers will introduce legislation to empower police forces and the criminal justice system to prevent new or complex crimes, such as digital-enabled crime and child sexual abuse, including grooming.

At a time when threats to national security are changing rapidly due to new technology, my Ministers will give the security and intelligence services the powers they need and will strengthen independent judicial oversight. Legislation will be introduced to protect public premises from terrorism in light of the Manchester Arena attack.

My Government will deliver on the Illegal Migration Act passed earlier this year and on international agreements, to stop dangerous and illegal Channel crossings and ensure it is the government, not criminal gangs, who decides who comes to this country.

My Government will continue to champion security around the world, to invest in our gallant Armed Forces and to support veterans to whom so much is owed. My Ministers will work closely with international

partners to support Ukraine, strengthen NATO and address the most pressing security challenges. This includes the consequences of the barbaric acts of terrorism against the people of Israel, facilitating humanitarian support into Gaza and supporting the cause of peace and stability in the Middle East.

My Government will continue to lead action on tackling climate change and biodiversity loss, support developing countries with their energy transition, and hold other countries to their environmental commitments.

The United Kingdom will continue to lead international discussions to ensure that Artificial Intelligence is developed safely.

My Government will host the Global Investment Summit, the European Political Community, and the Energy Conference, leading global conversations on the United Kingdom's most pressing challenges.

I look forward to welcoming His Excellency the President of the Republic of Korea and Mrs. Kim Keon Hee for a State Visit later this month.

My Government will, in all respects, seek to make long-term decisions in the interests of future generations. My Ministers will address inflation and the drivers of low growth over demands for greater spending or borrowing. My Ministers will put the security of communities and the nation ahead of the rights of those who endanger it. By taking these long-term decisions, my Government will change this country and build a better future.

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

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons, other measures will be laid before you.

I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels."

11.46 am

The House adjourned during pleasure.

3.30 pm

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Southwark

Select Vestries Bill *First Reading*

3.38 pm

The Bill was read a first time pro forma.

King's Speech *Debate (1st Day)*

3.38 pm

The Lord Speaker (Lord McFall of Alcluith): My Lords, I have to acquaint the House that His Majesty was pleased this morning to make a most gracious Speech from the Throne to both Houses of Parliament assembled in the House of Lords. Copies of the gracious Speech are available in the Printed Paper Office.

I have, for the convenience of the House, arranged for the terms of the gracious Speech to be published in the *Official Report*.

Motion for an Humble Address

Moved by **Lord McInnes of Kilwinning**

That an humble Address be presented to His 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 was addressed to both Houses of Parliament”.

Lord McInnes of Kilwinning (Con): My Lords, it is of course a great honour and privilege to have been asked to propose the humble Address to His Majesty this afternoon. It was with a sense of trepidation that my noble friend Lady Stedman-Scott and I approached the Chief Whips’ Office, having been asked to come and see the Chief Whip for what had euphemistically been described as “a chat”. We left knowing we had been given today’s important task—and no relaxation over Prorogation for us. The Chief Whip did have the good sense to ask this dour, Presbyterian Scot to be the proposer—traditionally, the less gag-filled part of the proceedings. “Not many jokes there”, I guess was the assessment. It does, of course, allow for my noble friend Lady Stedman-Scott to pick up any missteps I should make, and to ensure we all laugh so much as to forget them. I am reminded of the feeling when proposing the toast to the lassies at a Burns supper, and realising that the razor wit that is my noble friend Lady Goldie was being given the right of reply.

Today is of course an historic day, as we have received from His Majesty the first King’s Speech of the new reign. His Majesty spoke movingly this morning of the great loss we all suffered in the passing of Her late Majesty. I am sure that, like me, all noble Lords marvelled at the stoic determination Their Majesties and the wider Royal Family demonstrated in continuing to serve our nation in their time of intense grief. Their Majesties’ continued public service is the very best of legacies from Her late Majesty.

Constitutional monarchy provides this country with the stability that so many others crave, and that was why we witnessed the continuity of centuries of tradition this morning. The national pride and excitement around Their Majesties’ Coronation in May provided evidence, if any was needed, of the enormous affection in which they are held. It is also very appropriate to thank Black Rod and all her staff, including our excellent doorkeepers, for once again ensuring that this great occasion passed as magnificently as it always does.

The occasion of the King’s first Speech as monarch gave me cause to investigate the first Speech from the Throne to noble Lords of some of his predecessors. It seemed appropriate to begin with George III, not only because we now have the addition to your Lordships’ House of his excellent biographer, my noble friend Lord Roberts, but because it would be remiss of me, as

a unionist from Scotland, not to repeat his declaration in his first King’s Speech that, as the first Hanoverian monarch born in Britain, he gloried in the name of Britain.

However, it was the continuity of policy problems that face our politicians that struck me as I read these first Speeches from the Throne; reshuffles or no shuffles, the issues facing our country remain largely the same. The Chancellor could perhaps take note of the strict economy called for, rather surprisingly, by the non-penny-pinching, former Prince Regent George IV, as well as the need to curb inflation in Her late Majesty’s first Queen’s Speech in 1952.

For the Home Secretary: William IV looked forward to improving municipal policing—perhaps there are some good tips for the Met there—while wishing that nothing interferes with people making known their grievances. That is now too late for the Online Safety Act, but I am sure that noble Lords will take a deep interest in the media, digital and artificial intelligence Bills that will come before us.

For Michael Gove: leasehold reform was announced in 1952—and, I guess, many, many times since. It is never an easy topic, not least in your Lordships’ House. For Kemi Badenoch: Queen Victoria was looking forward to trade deals with Peru and Bolivia—although there was nothing on CPTPP.

Of particular interest to noble Lords in 1911 was the intention of George V’s Government to bring forward the Parliament Act. One suspects that House of Lords reform may make the occasional appearance in future Speeches from the Throne—but nothing too drastic.

On social issues, my noble friend Lady Shackleton and the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, will find divorce reform in George VI’s first King’s Speech. Another social issue, in Edward VII’s first King’s Speech, reducing drunkenness in public houses, is perhaps a more difficult topic to deal with—I am not sure which lucky Cabinet member would look after that—but there was nothing on smoking and vaping bans in any previous Speeches.

We take great pride in our ability to add long-range perspective to our scrutiny. Perhaps we shall require regular fillips from historic Speeches from the Throne in future. Perhaps, to take it a step forward, in this year before a general election, we should encourage those lucky people—the authors of those much-vaunted documents, the manifestos—merely to crib things from previous Speeches from the Throne on the basis that policy imperatives never really change.

It would be negligent of me not to mention that, for a party close to my heart—the toiling and disintegrating Scottish National Party, which is sadly not yet represented in your Lordships’ House—there was no Scottish independence Bill in this morning’s gracious Speech. Perhaps the party’s ever-changing policy position on the subject has something to do with that. We can look forward to its next contortion—a proposed electoral franchise based on ownership of camper-vans, perhaps.

The King’s Speech debate, which will follow, will properly scrutinise a programme for government that will affect every citizen of our great country. The purpose of many of the Bills will command the support

[LORD McINNES OF KILWINNING]
of this House, but we may all have a very occasional disagreement on the detail. As noble Lords consider and scrutinise the Bills contained, I am positive that we will, as Queen Victoria implored of the upper House in her first Queen's Speech, treat all Bills with true impartiality. How could anyone ever think that we would do anything differently? It gives me great pleasure to beg to move the Motion for an humble Address to His Majesty.

3.47 pm

Baroness Stedman-Scott (Con): My Lords—

Noble Lords: Hear, hear!

Baroness Stedman-Scott (Con): Calm down.

It gives me great pleasure to second my noble friend's Motion for an humble Address. When he first learned of his nomination for a life peerage, the soon-to-be Baron McInnes of Kilwinning said:

"I will do my very best to represent Scotland and Edinburgh to scrutinise legislation and bring what knowledge I have from a Scottish perspective and also with experience of working in local government to the House of Lords".

I am sure all noble Lords will agree that my noble friend has honoured this pledge and will continue to do so.

At this point, I should like to congratulate my noble friend on his eloquent and articulate contribution while moving the Motion for an humble Address. In preparing for this speech, I came across some interesting information about my noble friend, which I feel I must share. I discovered that a member of my noble friend's flock refers to him as "my darling Whip". A Whip's job is not easy at times, and you have to be very firm. All Whips across the House work hard to support us but I doubt that there has ever been a Government Whip who has been paid such a tribute.

My noble friend and I, in the utmost secrecy, shared some thoughts on our contributions. The advice we were given was not to be controversial or political and to be light-hearted. I am confident of one of the three. I hope that, so far, we have lived up to the advice. Up until now, all our communications in the House have happened in the Division Lobby, where my noble friend has made his instructions quite clear to us: "Thank you for voting"; "Please stay—there'll be another vote soon"; "Watch your messages"; "Thank you, the Whip is now off".

Today is an historic occasion. It is His Majesty's first King's Speech and, not surprisingly, His Majesty the King started by paying tribute to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who, in contrast to His Majesty the King, delivered no less than 67 Queen's Speeches. It is a delight for all of us to see that her legacy of commitment to duty and devotion to service is being carried on seamlessly by His Majesty the King.

Thinking about the first King's Speech in the new reign has led me to reflect on occasions that have been a first for me. When appointed as a Whip and Baroness in Waiting, I and others had an audience with the Queen. Our conversation moved very quickly to the

condition of the fabric of Parliament. I advised Her Majesty that we had our own firefighters, who regularly patrolled the estate and put out fires. Her Majesty advised me then that the room we were sat in had been rewired and that when they pulled up the floorboards they found that the mice had eaten all the plastic and it was now copper and wood. With typical spontaneity, Her Majesty said, "Well, neither of us need Guy Fawkes now".

This King's Speech prompts me to relate another first for me, as His Majesty referred early in his Speech to the war in Ukraine and the significant long-term challenges for the United Kingdom. This brings me to my second first experience. In September 2022, as Minister for Women, I had the honour to lead the United Kingdom delegation to the United Nations in New York for the Commission on the Status of Women. While there, I was asked to represent the Government at the Metropolitan Opera House, which was giving a concert for Ukraine. The Ukrainian bass singer sang the Ukrainian national anthem and, after he had finished, he fell into the arms of the conductor. The angst and distress of the Ukrainian people was absolutely awful. It was, and still is, one of the most moving experiences of my life.

His Majesty's Speech started by paying tribute to Her Majesty the late Queen, followed by the war in Ukraine and the impact of Covid. The impact of Covid on our economy has been immense, and it is right that our Government focus their efforts on bringing down inflation and thus easing the cost of living for families.

Some noble Lords will know that the principal focus of my career has been helping people of all ages who are trying to enter or re-enter the labour market. I was, as you would expect, pleased to hear in the King's Speech that the Government would

"help businesses fund new jobs and investment".

Third sector organisations, of which many of us have been part, have a real role to play in this quest. They understand and are close to the people they are trying to help, and they are able to comprehend the real challenges that they face. The King's Speech highlights some of the areas that will help to create jobs and support people into employment. When I ran a third sector organisation which was helping unemployed people, we used to go out on a Saturday as a management team and speak to unemployed people. We would ask them, "What are we doing that is no good to you, what are we doing that is good and what are we not doing that we should?" I learned from that that getting a job is one thing, but keeping it, with numerous obstacles to overcome, is another.

At this point, I am sure I can share something with our ecclesiastical colleagues. I was rather hoping that the most reverend Primate the Archbishop would be here today, but the right reverend Prelates will understand the analogy that getting saved is one thing and staying saved another. I am sure that the third sector, faith groups, Jobcentre Plus and employers will work together to ensure that people can get and keep a job.

Your Lordships will be relieved to know that I do not see it as my role today to comment on every part of the King's Speech. We will have the opportunity to

debate it over the next few days. However, I will mention a few parts of it which will allow us to help people to enter the labour market and improve their lives. There is the investment in renewable energy, strengthening education, upskilling people, bringing together technical and academic routes, increasing the number of young people doing high-quality apprenticeships, continuing to negotiate trade agreements—although I doubt in Peru and Bolivia—supporting the creative industries, and reforming welfare.

The last point in this King's Speech which I am keen to highlight is the expansion of transforming mental health issues and services. For people who are vulnerable and out of the labour market, mental health is a massive issue. I am glad that more support will be given. I look forward to the National Health Service and DWP working together on this. However, rather than providing those people with these services as a quick fix, those people must be supported as they go on. Getting a job is one thing; keeping it is another.

The King's Speech has driven home the message that we live in challenging times. However, I firmly believe that the combined expertise of the Members of this House will play its part in helping the country to rise to those challenges. I look forward to working with all noble Lords to do our utmost to ensure that the world becomes a safer place and that our country can overcome the challenges that we face, for the people whom we are here to serve.

Motion to Adjourn

Moved by Baroness Smith of Basildon

That this debate be adjourned until tomorrow.

3.56 pm

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab): My Lords, as we look ahead to the Government's programme for this last Session of this Parliament, it is also, as we have heard, a time of reflection. Last year, when Her Majesty the late Queen was unable to be with us, we were looking forward to her Platinum Jubilee celebrations a few weeks later. Yet before the year was out, a nation and so many across the world were united in grief and respect as we paid tribute to her extraordinary service. We as a House were proud that, at the Coronation of King Charles, colleagues from your Lordships' House representing the four faiths—the noble Lords, Lord Kamall, Lord Singh of Wimbledon and Lord Patel, and my noble friend Lady Merron—played an important role in that ceremony. We welcomed that our new King made so clear his commitment to all the peoples of our nation and the Commonwealth.

Each gracious Speech is a stand-alone historic event with its own character that leaves its own memories. Today's is the first since 1950 in which the King has announced the Government's legislative programme for the year ahead. The last King's Speech was in 1951, as we heard, when ill health prevented George VI from attending. The previous year, 1950, saw two King's Speeches, one in March and the other at the end of October. At that time, the work to repair Parliament following the Second World War had not been completed.

Debates were still taking place in the Robing Room, apparently in some discomfort, with building work continuing and the sounds of pneumatic drills reverberating around the building—it sounds familiar. Viscount Jowitt, replying to the debate as Lord Chancellor, was clearly irritated and complained that:

“Apparently according to precedent, the door behind me is left open and there is a howling draught blowing round my silk stockings”.—[*Official Report*, 2/11/1950; col. 132.]

Well, these days the silk stockings have gone, but I confirm from these Benches that the howling draught remains.

Today it is my pleasure once again, as Leader of the Opposition, to pay tribute to the proposer and the seconder of the Motion for an Humble Address. Both speakers today did the House proud. It is a great honour to be asked, either as the up-and-coming bright young thing or as the experienced veteran, but I imagine it is one of the most nerve-racking experiences that any parliamentarian could be asked to undertake—insert “said with feeling”. First, there is a trepidation about the role you are being asked to fill. I have never quite understood at what point in our political lives, or our lives in general, we slide from being the one to watch to being the wise old sage. But I am sure that we all agree that it happens far too quickly.

For the 1974 Speech, Lady Birk was on her way to the Chamber when she fell and cut her head. As she was whisked away for medical attention, Lord Shepherd, the new Labour Leader of the House, had to find a replacement with just minutes to spare. Lord Fenner Brockway, at the very last moment, crafted some words in his head as he entered the Chamber. A true professional, he delivered an excellent and thoughtful speech—although he did comment that, at the age of 86, he could hardly be described as up and coming.

In some ways, it was hard to tell which was which today, as both speakers displayed not only experience and knowledge but a fresh and enthusiastic outlook. The noble Lord, Lord McInnes, has shown his wide range of experience and interest since he was appointed to your Lordships' House seven years ago. He has considerable experience in the political world from Scotland, with 14 years spent as a councillor in the great city of Edinburgh; and, as Boris Johnson's senior adviser in Downing Street on constitutional issues, he must have some fine tales to tell. I am sure that he would have an enthusiastic publisher for his book. It is probably to his surprise, as it was to mine, that his long tenure as director of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party is listed on the parliamentary website as “non-political experience”. Having heard his excellent speech today, we look forward to hearing more from him.

The noble Baroness, Lady Stedman-Scott, is well known to the House, having spent many hours at the Dispatch Box. Prior to joining your Lordships' House in 2010—just four days after me—she spent 30 years with Tomorrow's People Trust, which she spoke about, working her way up to becoming the chief executive officer. In 2005, she was proud to receive the charity principal of the year award. In her maiden speech, she informed us that not only was she a lifelong Conservative but she had a distinguished heritage, with 10 of her

[BARONESS SMITH OF BASILDON]

ancestors being Conservative MPs and two being previous Members of your Lordships' House. Who knew? She stood down from the Government last year, having served as a Whip and the Women and Equalities Minister, as well as holding posts at the Department for Work and Pensions and the Foreign Office. She is known for her kindness to colleagues. Many of us, when asking questions, have appreciated how often she was willing to take issues back to the department. Her speech today was enjoyed by the whole House. Thank you.

This is the seventh time that I have responded to the Motion for an humble Address from the Dispatch Box on this side of the House. Who knows? Could this be my last time—as Leader of the Opposition, I hasten to add?

For many of our citizens, these are challenging and worrying times. Our previous debates were held against the backdrop of Putin's invasion of Ukraine. While that terrible war continues and we remain steadfast in our commitment to and support for Ukraine, it has been forced off the headlines by the shocking events in the Middle East. Today is just a month since Hamas's brutal attack on Israel, with 1,400 people murdered and over 200 taken hostages. Their families still do not know their fate. The violence and suffering that has been unleashed is devastating. As the death toll in Gaza continues to rise, it is clear that humanitarian support is now essential to ensure that aid gets to those who desperately need it, and the hostages must be released.

Over the years, it has been too easy to look away when there have been tensions, and just to hope that peace will endure. When it does not, it is harder to find a way back and to keep the faith that a lasting peace is possible. But we must hold on to that faith. Saying that something is so does not make it happen. With so much suffering and violence across the world, our role, working internationally with other countries and institutions for the greater good, remains essential.

Here at home, last year's Coronation was a celebration of faiths coming together. Many faith leaders work in their communities to foster understanding and acceptance of our differences, and to celebrate both shared and diverse views. When the world can feel more divided, those who are striving to bridge and heal divisions must be able to rely on our support.

At the same time as we see international conflict, so many here at home are worried about their future, for them and their families. The cost of living crisis is felt by almost everyone. For a country to thrive requires good governance, with competence, optimism, confidence and vision, and over the past few weeks there has been that usual intense speculation from experts—such as political journalists—about the content of the King's Speech. But most of those reports were depressingly similar; little about policy but that Rishi Sunak would seek to provoke dividing lines with the Labour Party as a last chance to protect a failing Government. It would be, it was said, a manifesto for the next election—so no ambition for the country but ambition for the Prime Minister to try to keep his job. Listen to the Speech: there is little to inspire and give confidence that the Government understand the seriousness of the challenges that the country faces.

When we look at the Bills, I have to say that it is just disappointing. Yes, I understand that a football regulator is important; yes, we all want to see health improved by cutting back on the damage caused by smoking; and of course we support the introduction of both Jade's law and Martyn's law. But where is the overriding ambition? Where is the sense of the scale of reform that is necessary? Where is the vision? Even the Energy Secretary had to concede that the oil and gas Bill would do nothing to tackle high energy bills. The much-mooted radical overhaul of transport has been reduced to Bills that will deal with driverless buses and unlicensed pedicabs in London. We are being promised tougher sentences, yet only weeks ago judges were being told not to send offenders to prison because there was no room for them.

There is a commitment to reform the law for leaseholders, yet apparently it is only some reform for some leaseholders, as the 70% who live in flats are to be excluded. Well, I would not want to be the Minister explaining that one to my noble friend Lord Kennedy of Southwark. As we wait to see the detail of the much-delayed Renters (Reform) Bill, any reversal or delay on no-fault evictions is a betrayal of those renting their homes—and I would not want to be the Minister explaining that one to the noble Lord, Lord Young of Cookham. Perhaps, as we have a Home Secretary who describes homelessness as a "lifestyle choice" and wants to ban charities providing tents, we should not be shocked at the Government's housing failures.

Where is the long-promised employment Bill? Just think of the opportunities that could offer. If we really want to grow our economy, we must recognise that having strong and fair rights for those in work is absolutely essential and good for growth.

Across the world we are seeing extreme weather conditions and the impact of pollution. Reducing emissions and seeking to tackle the climate crisis is not about making life harder for people, it is about seizing opportunities—the opportunities for new skills, for the creation of new jobs and for investment in the ongoing transition with related industries. New rights at work should be part of an overall modern industrial strategy where we work with industry in training the next generation in skills needed for the jobs of the future. Our education system has to be a route where every child, whatever their background, can achieve their potential, yet when the Government say they are going to reform the education system "for the long term", what they really mean is "in the long term", because these proposals are still on the drawing board and it will take 10 years for them to be brought forward.

It does not have to be like this. I am an optimist and government does not have to be about just managing or looking to see where an issue can be exploited to maximise votes. Government can and should be a force for good: an innovator, an enabler and an investor. Today, our nation needs policies for national renewal to drive forward our economy, education system and public services. If Labour were in government today, we would establish a national wealth fund to invest in battery gigafactories and clean steel plants and a

publicly owned GB energy company to improve procurement, speed up green transition and make us a global leader in clean energy. Our focus would be on security of supply for homes and businesses and on protecting consumers from rising prices, and we have plans to build 1.5 million homes across the country. Our plans for government would unlock the potential for our country to grow and to thrive.

When Labour lost the 2019 election so badly, many thought it would take a decade or a generation to recover. But, in the same way as we understood the scale of the change needed in our party, and delivered it, we understand the scale of the change needed for the country. In the same way as we had the ambition to change our party, we have the ambition to change our country.

In the other place today, Keir Starmer sets out his commitment to

“lead a dynamic, mission-driven Government that will get Britain building and turbocharge renewal in every community”

across the country. So it is partly about vision and hope, but it is also about belief—belief in the potential of our public services, belief in the potential of our industries to invest and transition to the economy of the future, and belief that the public deserve better and that we as political leaders can do better than this for them. I beg to move that this debate be adjourned until tomorrow.

4.11 pm

Lord Newby (LD): My Lords, it is a great pleasure to congratulate the noble Lord, Lord McInnes, on his speech moving the humble Address. The noble Lord was a force to be reckoned with in Scottish Conservatism, bringing the party to great electoral success. I am told by my Scottish colleagues that he did so in part by appropriating Liberal Democrat tactics of community politics. This shows what a shrewd and wise person he is. He is widely respected across all parties in Scotland and was famously praised by Lord Darling of Roulanish as a “house-trained Tory and a Tory you wouldn't mind having in the House”. He sounds to me to be in the wrong party—but, in any event, we very much look forward to future contributions in your Lordships' debates.

The noble Baroness, Lady Stedman-Scott, has brought to the House not only a wealth of experience in the charity field but great warmth and transparent honesty. We on this side of the House always looked forward to her answering Questions from the Dispatch Box because she brilliantly deflected the most fervent criticism with a sympathetic smile and a commitment to take the issue back to the department. We sensed that she sometimes silently agreed with the questioner. We now look forward to hearing what she really thinks from the Back Benches.

This is obviously the last King's Speech of this Government, and it certainly has a tail-end Charlie feel to it. Within a year, the Government will be putting their record and their plans to the electorate, and there will be five broad areas against which they will be principally judged. The first is the economy. We do not know exactly how the numbers will move over the next 12 months, but we can be pretty certain that

we will go into the election with anaemic growth at best, higher inflation than many of our competitors and, as a result, a continuing cost of living squeeze. Mortgage holders will increasingly be paying much higher rates of interest as their fixed-term loans come up for remortgaging.

Growth is the only way to ease these pressures, but this will require an industrial strategy, more private and public sector investment, an apprenticeship system that actually works and trading arrangements with our nearest neighbours that do not make exporting by small businesses prohibitively expensive. The King's Speech promises nothing but warm words on all of this.

The second is public services, particularly health and social care. We have record backlogs in the NHS, widespread shortages of GPs and dentists, and a social care system that simply cannot meet demand. Partly as a result of the pandemic, we also have record numbers of people with mental health problems and an urgent need for enhanced public health interventions to stem the growing tide of preventable illness. The Government have at long last produced a workforce plan to address some of these issues, but it lacks urgency and funding for its implementation—and yet again, the Government have dodged the pressing issue of how to pay for long-term social care.

The third is the environment. Although the Government pay lip service to achieving net zero by 2050, their most recent policy pronouncements make that less rather than more likely. Rowing back on the timing of phasing out petrol and diesel vehicles has dismayed the industry as much as it has dismayed environmental campaigners. Pathetically low levels of installation of heat pumps not only put us behind virtually every other European country but make the decarbonisation of household heating a distant dream rather than an urgent requirement. The abject failure of the national grid to accommodate new patterns of electricity generation and use is now a national disgrace.

The Government's response is to make it easier to drill for oil and gas in the North Sea. Despite energy bills being double what they were last year, the Energy Secretary—as the noble Baroness, Lady Smith of Basildon, said—admitted yesterday morning that this policy will do nothing to cut energy bills. It will, of course, do nothing to help the switch to renewable energy, insulate our homes or help the most vulnerable pay their bills while prices remain high.

As far as the natural environment is concerned, the Government's attempt to get rid of nutrient neutrality rules and their failure to clamp down on polluting water companies show a depressing lack of concern, to put it very mildly. All Governments should seek to hand over our precious natural environment in a better state than they found it. This one will abjectly fail to do so.

The fourth is international affairs. International crises are often the great unpredictable disruptors that preoccupy our politics, and in this Parliament Ukraine and now Gaza have done so. We have supported the Government in their response to Ukraine, and on Gaza we agree that Israel has the clear right to defend itself against attack, but we are concerned about the

[LORD NEWBY]
 impact of its response on the innocent citizens of Gaza. We call for a humanitarian ceasefire and the release of all the hostages and call on the Government to intensify their diplomatic efforts to bring these about.

There remains the ongoing highly unsatisfactory relationship with Europe. We always claimed that Brexit would make us poorer, less secure and less influential. The past couple of years have amply demonstrated this truth. The Government have had to be dragged kicking and screaming back into the Horizon programme, took months to get a more sensible arrangement in Northern Ireland and have failed to do even the most minimal amount which could be achieved in respect of trade and free movement of people.

The fifth of the great issues facing us is the way in which the country is run. Of all the shortcomings of this Government, arguably the most significant is the damage they have done to our constitution. Their last manifesto promised a constitutional convention, but instead of serious thinking and measured proposals we have had a collapse of standards in public life, being daily illuminated by the Covid inquiry. All this has eroded trust in domestic politics, to such an extent that recent polling shows that some 60% of young people think we would be better off if we were run simply by a strong leader and did not even have to bother with Parliament or elections at all. Anybody who has done any canvassing in the past few years has been faced with a growing number of people who have given up on voting altogether and are angry and unrepentant abstainers.

Needless to say, there is literally nothing in the King's Speech that addresses these crises in our political system. Instead of serious measures to deal with these five priority areas, we have a programme of shreds and patches. Some of the proposals we broadly support—for example, on renters' reform, the football regulator and pensions reform. On some, the Government clearly lack a sense of irony: a rudderless Government proposing measures to deal with driverless vehicles, I am afraid, cannot but provoke a smile.

Other measures seem to have as their principal purpose driving a wedge between the parties, and they are likely to lead to a less, rather than more, fair and united society. How else can we explain the Home Secretary's desire to criminalise the provision of tents for the homeless? How else can we explain proposals for even longer sentences when our jails are full to bursting point?

The silver lining to this whole King's Speech is that it is necessarily the last that will be written by this wretched Government. The election next year will give us a chance to replace them with a Government who are honest, decent, fair and competent. The sooner we have this opportunity, the better.

4.21 pm

Lord True (Con): My Lords, the convention is to say that it is always a pleasure to follow the noble Baroness, Lady Smith of Basildon, and the noble Lord, Lord Newby, but I have to say, having listened

to the noble Lord on this auspicious, splendid and happy day, that it was a bit like being served at the end of one's meal cold coffee and a soggy soufflé.

I would like to think that I could say something warmer about the noble Lord's speech so I will try to do so. I find it amazing that, after a quarter of a century of trying since I first came to work here, I have now reached the average age of your Lordships' House. One of the things about being older and Conservative is that one likes things to stay the same, so it was deeply reassuring to hear the trenchant criticisms of the Government from the noble Lords opposite. Some things never change and, as a good Conservative, I look forward to next year hearing them make the same criticisms—perhaps not always in the same terms but from the same seats that they occupy today.

Nevertheless, I like the noble Baroness and the noble Lord. They are not always angry, and they and their colleagues make the usual channels on which the operation of this House fundamentally depends work smoothly, and almost always with good humour. I should not forget the noble Earl, Lord Kinnoull, honed by 16 generations of Scottish deftness and silken charm—you have to watch those ones. But I sincerely thank them all.

Speaking of Scottish deftness and charm, I should say how much we all enjoyed the superb speech of my noble friend Lord McInnes of Kilwinning, as we did that of my noble friend Lady Stedman-Scott. My noble friend Lord McInnes recalled—as did His Majesty in his gracious Speech—the extraordinary lifelong service of our late beloved Queen Elizabeth, to which the noble Baroness opposite also referred. It does not seem so long ago that we gathered here after her loss on that so very poignant day before the empty Throne; but experience has a habit of making the extraordinary seem ordinary.

This whole House—as we have heard today—is already steeped in gratitude for the dignity and good humour with which His Majesty has, after what was already over half a century of dedicated public service, taken up his great new responsibilities on behalf of us all. He did our nation proud in those memorable first state visits to Germany, France, and now, lately, to Kenya. I believe we are fortunate in our deeply thoughtful and gracious King.

Those who do not stray too often into the Not-Content Lobby—and I note from last Session's statistics that that includes the overwhelming preponderance of the independent Cross-Benchers—will not know that as you come out of that Lobby my noble friend Lord McInnes is standing there, always smiling, cheerfully telling everyone who passes, "Another vote coming up soon, my Lords". Given that we lost nearly 70% of the votes in the last Session and a record number of votes in the Session before that, I think that stamps my noble friend not as the dour Presbyterian that he has described himself as but as a sunny and incurable optimist. We need a bit more of that—perhaps I can offer some to the Liberal Democrat Benches.

I turn to my noble friend Lady Stedman-Scott. I know we can all agree that it has been the great good fortune of this House to have benefited from her profound generosity of heart, her direct, sound sense

and her expertise on welfare. We on the Government Benches were very sad when for personal reasons she had to stand down from the Department for Work and Pensions and her other duties. I believe she has made and will continue to make a real difference to the lives of some of the most vulnerable in society, and for my part that is surely one of the highest callings of anyone in public service. Simply put, my noble friend is one of life's good people. She is one of those people in this House who you are always delighted to see heading towards you—and I must confess that that is not an absolutely universal quality. *[Laughter]* Do not tempt me. The whole House will have been moved by the poignant story that my noble friend told from her visit to New York last year. As the noble Baroness opposite also said, we think of our friends in Ukraine as we gather today.

The Government's commitment to Ukraine will remain unwavering. Whenever I say that in this House as your Lordships' Leader, I am fortified by the resolve shared by the whole House, as we have heard again today, that Putin's foul aggression cannot and must not prevail.

We think also of the victims of the truly barbaric atrocities perpetrated by Hamas against Israel a month ago today in which at least 14 British nationals were killed, and for which there can be no justification whatever. The Government continue to support Israel's right to defend itself in line with international humanitarian law. We must also support the Palestinian people and are doing so; they are victims of Hamas too. As the Prime Minister has said, there is no scenario where Hamas can be allowed to control Gaza again. We are working to support British nationals in Gaza and the wider region and to secure the safe return of hostages. We continue to work with international partners to prevent a destabilising regional escalation.

Before I proceed further, I join others in thanking Black Rod, the doorkeepers and all the staff for the skill with which our historic ceremony was conducted today. It was good to see it in all its finery once again. In fact, it is the first time for over 70 years that we have had a King and Queen present with full trains, and some thought went into the pages moving the trains and getting the royal couple in and out. And what about a Lord Chancellor walking backwards? Don't you just love it?

In my first speech on this occasion, I want to thank my predecessor, my noble friend Lady Evans of Bowes Park. I know she will be aghast to hear any praise for her, but she was an extraordinary Leader of this House for over six years, and it has been a hard call to follow her. I would like personally and publicly to thank her for her kind and wise advice to me.

I thank too my sterling Front-Bench colleagues for their tremendous work and dedication. They do a brilliant job, many of them without remuneration. I believe it is unacceptable in the 21st century that some of those who serve this House can do so only if they have private means. It does not reflect the dignity of the House or give those who serve our country faithfully their proper due. I have sought ways to overcome this, so far unsuccessfully, but I will continue to try.

No one could say that the last, long 16-month Session was a breeze. I am not a fan of long Sessions, as the appetites of departments—we could all round up the usual suspects, I am sure—all too often “level up” to fill the time available. Of the near 8,000 amendments that your Lordships considered in the last Session, 2,680 made to Bills came from the Government. That is too many, and I can assure the House that I and my noble friend Lady Williams, the Captain of the Gentlemen-at-Arms—and how lucky we are to have her—make this point to colleagues. However, the House never failed in its duty to scrutinise and revise—although perhaps sometimes we should recall that the elected House is not so stupid that it cannot hear our requests for it to think again the first time round. In the midst of it all, we passed a useful and, yes, improved programme of legislation, which will have tangible benefits on the lives of our citizens—even though at times it seemed easier, perhaps, to row a kayak across the North Sea during Storm Ciarán than to get a Bill to stop the boats through your Lordships' House.

There is another important programme of work before us this Session. That programme will help us to grow our economy, keep our people safe and promote our national interests. Yes, we will back North Sea oil and gas extraction. Why? It is to help secure energy security and independence and save hundreds of thousands of jobs. We remain committed to our net-zero targets but we must get there in a prudent and proportionate way.

I know that this is not the favourite word of some of your Lordships, but we will continue to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by Brexit. Unwanted retained EU law will finally go and this Session we will cement accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, fostering trade and investment with some of the world's fastest-growing economies. Public service broadcasting will be safeguarded and we will repeal Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act, which would have limited press freedom. We will give the police the tools they need to prevent complex new forms of crime.

Noble Lords will be aware that a number of Bills have already started in the other place and will be carried over. They include a Bill to ban public bodies implementing politically motivated boycotts of foreign countries and a Bill to improve the law on rents, to give tenants more security and landlords more control over their properties. There will also be a Bill to reform leasehold. I have to say that, when it was mentioned in the gracious Speech, I peeked out from under the Cap of Maintenance at the noble Lord, Lord Kennedy of Southwark, and saw that there was not a flicker of a smile on that normally sunny countenance. I hope that, given his constant, almost daily, questions on this subject, we may expect his strong support for leasehold reform.

As well as carry-overs, some of which will arrive before Christmas, there will be four Lords starters. These will include the pedicabs Bill, the autonomous vehicles Bill and the investigatory powers amendment Bill, which will have their Second Readings this month. I look forward to spirited but constructive debate in the months ahead. I know that it could be the last Session before a general election, when passions flame,

[LORD TRUE]

but I hope that we will always be mindful of our traditional courtesies. They are part of who we are and why we work here well.

Perhaps I may conclude with a personal note, because it has been the privilege of a lifetime to serve this House for over 26 years, first below the salt and now, in a sort of Gilbert and Sullivan way, with the silver salt cellar of the Lord Privy Seal set before me. This may be a fault in me, but I can think of no greater honour than to be asked to lead this House. It would be the happiest and greatest thing for me if your Lordships were to feel not only that I was skilful in getting “terrible government legislation” through—that is what the Opposition would say, of course; I have to put that in, in case people read *Hansard* and have not heard the tone—but that I was dutiful in listening to Peers on all sides, and in helping the whole House to secure the good service and support that makes this a place where we can carry out our unique duties comfortably and well. That this should be a happy place is something that matters very much to me and, I know, to others opposite. I wish sometimes, however, that we would focus on the great if often humdrum work that we do, rather than calling out imagined faults and fidgeting about change that no one outside calls for and few would notice.

The reality is that, because of the failure of the procedure of the House of Commons in recent generations to do its legislative work thoroughly, this House recovered from the folly of a challenge to the Budget to fill that space and has become a literally indispensable revising Chamber. That is our role, and to do it we need rich diversity—more than we still yet have—including diversity of thought and experience. We need deep expertise, open minds and that sense of proportion which must always inform our judgments. The last thing we need is a House of political clones told by the media to turn up every day and be judged on how often they speak.

If I may, increasing numbers of your Lordships complain to me that sometimes in Committee and on Report, some of us speak for a little too long and a little too repetitively. I believe we could, with advantage, reinforce some of our older conventions, not only in these respects but in the way we regard the view of the other House. This House must, at some point, normally defer to the elected Chamber.

I am conscious that it was from this Dispatch Box that the great Duke of Wellington led an unwilling House to let pass Catholic emancipation in the 1820s, reform the franchise in the 1830s and usher in free trade in the 1840s. Let us never forget that the Attlee Government started with only 16 Labour Peers, was outnumbered 10 to one by this side but went on to secure its reforming programme by agreement, good practice and convention.

As we continue to reflect on how best to perform our vital role and carry out our functions in line with our conventions, I will continue to reach out to your Lordships across the House where there is potential

for reinforcing and building confidence in them. In my humble submission, unlike the vaulting ambition of grand reform, this approach is entirely in our hands.

I know I have troubled noble Lords' digestion and agitated your good wine for too long. It has been a great and historic day in the presence of our new King, so I will finish by sharing the sunny optimism of my noble friend Lord McInnes. As that optimist, I say that I trust that this serious and ambitious legislative programme, which comes from a Government led by a Prime Minister with dedication to the long-term changes Britain needs, will commend itself to a majority of your Lordships. I look forward to sharing the work of the next Session with you, and it gives me great pleasure to support the Motion.

Debate adjourned until tomorrow.

Senior Deputy Speaker

4.38 pm

Moved by Lord True

That Lord Gardiner of Kimble be appointed as Senior Deputy Speaker (Chairman of Committees) for this Session.

Motion agreed nemine dissentiente.

Stoppages in the Streets

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

Members of the House

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

Hereditary Peers: By-elections

The Clerk of the Parliaments laid before the House, in accordance with Standing Order 9(4), a register of hereditary peers (other than peers of Ireland) who wish to stand in any by-election for membership of the House held in accordance with section 2(4) of the House of Lords Act 1999; it was ordered that the register be published.

House adjourned at 4.38 pm.