



UNITED KINGDOM

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Top: The Queen accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh at the State Opening of Parliament;
Below: Speaker Rt Hon. John Bercow and Black Rod lead MPs from the Commons to the Lords for the State Opening in 2010. Images: © parliamentary copyrighted.



INTRODUCTION TO THE 2011 COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE

Dear Colleagues,

We welcome Members to this 57th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) 2011 supplement to The Parliamentarian. We are most grateful to the many contributors, Parliamentarian and non-Parliamentarian.


Articles reflect the theme of the 57th CPC, "Reinforcing Democracy" and this year's Commonwealth theme, "Women as Agents of Change". As has become customary for CPC supplements, many of the articles have a flavour of the host country in addressing those issues which impact upon us as Parliamentarians and upon the people whom we have the privilege of representing.

We very much hope that you will enjoy reading the CPC 2011 supplement and that those of you attending this very special conference in July 2011, which marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the original Association at the Houses of Parliament at Westminster in July 1911, will discuss the issues raised in the articles with fellow delegates and with many of the authors who will be present at CPC 2011.

Rt Hon. Sir Alan Haselhurst, MP, Chair of the CPA U.K. Executive Committee, and the CPA U.K. team have been working closely with the CPA Headquarters Secretariat to deliver a conference for an Association looking forward to the next century of excellence, strengthening parliamentary democracy in the Commonwealth and beyond, and enhancing further the service it provides to its 17,000 Members.

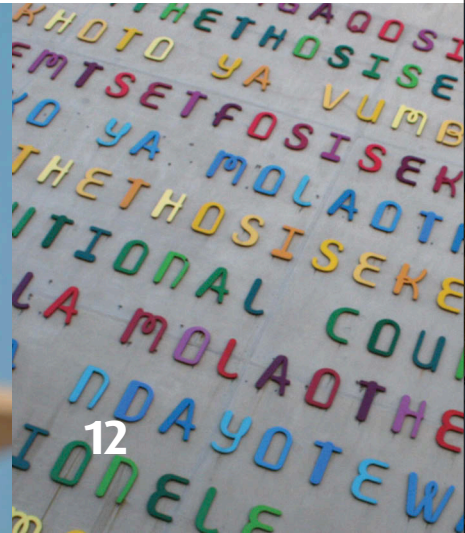


RT HON. JOHN BERCOW MP
Speaker of the House of Commons
President
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association



RT HON. BARONESS HAYMAN
Lord Speaker
President
Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians





PROFILE: WESTMINSTER

HOST TO THE 2011

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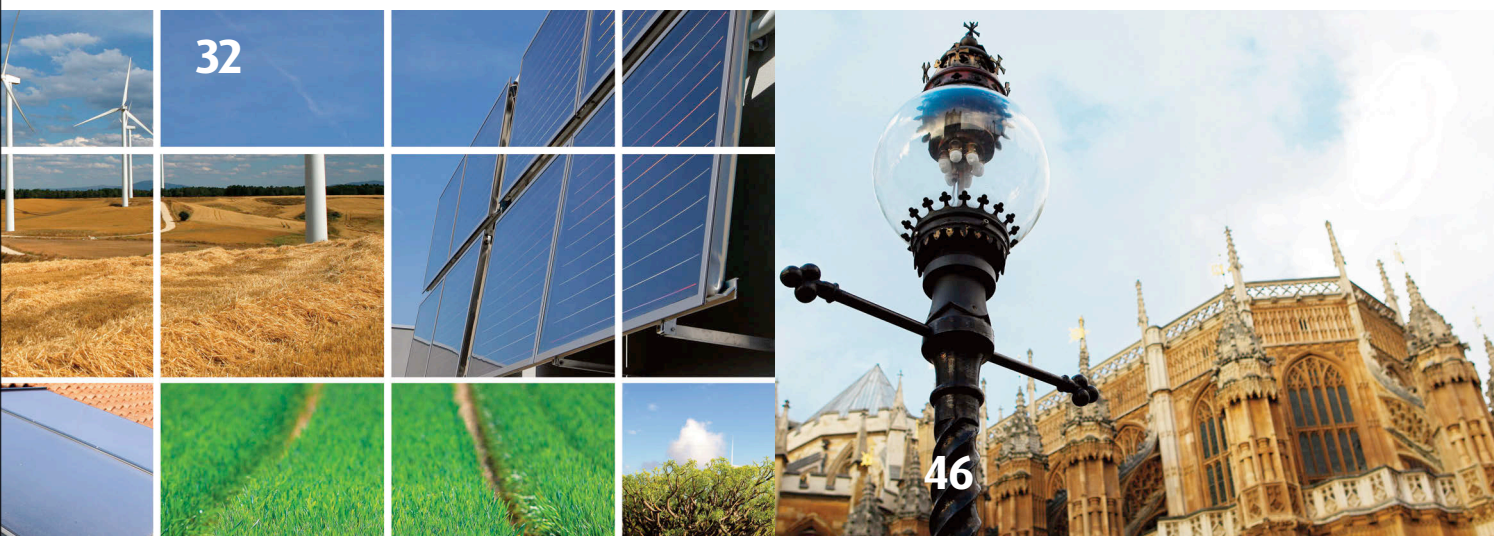
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Aerial view of the U.K. Parliament and the surrounding vicinity © parliamentary copyrighted

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Top: St Stephen's Hall; Bottom left: Westminster Hall; Bottom right: Detail of Sovereign's Entrance to Victoria Tower. All images © parliamentary copyrighted



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THE COMMONWEALTH AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Commonwealth is a prominent and vital component of Britain’s international efforts to promote development and good governance; but the organization and its member states must also build on its strengths to make the Commonwealth the global champion of the values for which it stands, says the United Kingdom International Development Secretary.

Rt Hon. Andrew Mitchell, MP.

Mr Mitchell was appointed Secretary of State for International Development in May 2010. As Shadow Secretary of State for International Development from 2005 to 2010, he led his party's campaign to tackle global poverty. Mr Mitchell was the Member of Parliament for Gedling from 1987 to 1997. During that period he held office as a Government Whip and as Minister for Social Security and also served as a Vice-Chairman of the Conservative Party from 1992 to 1993.

You only have to look at the Commonwealth’s list of achievements, to feel a sense of pride and admiration - its role in ending apartheid in South Africa, the work it does to bolster democracy in countries such as Kenya, Rwanda and Nigeria. However, the Commonwealth is not some relic of a bygone age, it is a thriving, vital organization that is working to improve the lives of millions of people in some of the world’s poorest countries.

This government will stand by our commitment to the Commonwealth. The Coalition Agreement set out a commitment “to strengthen the Commonwealth as a focus for promoting democratic values and development.” The Foreign Secretary has said that his department will “lead a co-ordinated cross Whitehall approach to help the Commonwealth achieve its potential and which underlines the United Kingdom’s commitment to

this unique global organisation”. My department is acting on that commitment; strengthening our existing Commonwealth programmes, collaborating with a range of Commonwealth initiatives, and working to help ensure a successful Heads of Government meeting in October.

Our recent review of British aid has revealed that many Commonwealth states are still in need of our aid and support; 14 of the world’s poorest countries are Commonwealth members. We will match our historic ties with the Commonwealth with our determination to end global poverty. Through our aid programme, we will boost the health, education and the future chances of millions of Commonwealth citizens who continue to live in poverty.

We will be investing more in girls and women – who, in turn will invest in their families and communities.

In Sierra Leone our education



Rt Hon. Andrew Mitchell, MP.

support will help put nearly 50,000 adolescent girls through secondary school by 2014 and keep in excess of 500,000 children in primary schooling.

In Rwanda we will help more than 50,000 more women to give birth under the care of skilled health personnel, dramatically increasing the chances that these births will be safe and successful.

In addition we will enable 300,000 girls to receive training on sexual health and rights, helping them to make informed choices



People who have participated in the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan have contributed significantly to development, particularly in the field of higher education, when they have returned to their respective countries.

about when to have children and how to remain healthy.

We will also do more to provide opportunities for people to trade, save and work – so they can begin to lift themselves out of poverty.

My department is the major supporter of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, an international programme under which member governments offer scholarships and fellowships to citizens of other Commonwealth countries. Evaluations show that when these individuals return home they then contribute to development, especially in the field of higher education. The review of this initiative reported that the scheme is efficient and well run and this is something that bodes well for when a decision is taken in relation to continued support for the programme.

The Commonwealth is home to two billion people, approximately 30 per cent of the world's population. It includes 13 of the world's fastest growing economies

and all major religious groups. Such diversity means that the Commonwealth is well placed to help all nations to respond effectively to global political and economic changes, not least in the field of international development. Its programmes on debt management, maritime boundaries and natural resources which directly promote economic development are just a few examples of how the Commonwealth contributes to international development.

However whilst the Commonwealth has a strong track record in some areas of international development, it must do more to strengthen its impact. The Multilateral Aid Review was a root and branch analysis of the value for money offered by 43 international agencies through which U.K. aid is channelled. The review found that the Commonwealth Secretariat has scope for improvement. By prioritizing the areas where it can

add most value such as governance, advocacy and networking and improving co-ordination across the different parts of the Commonwealth family, it can start to fulfil all of its development potential.

It is heartening though to see the Commonwealth membership is already taking steps in the right direction. The work of the Eminent Persons Group will set a new and improved strategic direction for the organization, while the Commonwealth Consultation, an open debate about the future of the Commonwealth will help shape its work, making it more relevant to the people it serves.

I have been struck by the extent to which individual Commonwealth member states value and trust the Commonwealth. Small states, which represent 34 of the 54 members, especially value the organization and feel that it speaks for them. This imbues the Commonwealth with credibility and moral authority. It allows the

Commonwealth to work on sensitive issues of governance and human rights that others cannot.

I want the Commonwealth to be a champion of Commonwealth values, especially on governance and human rights. These are the foundations of development. It should also become a powerful voice for its members, campaigning on key global issues such as climate change, linking to its strengths as a convening and influencing body. Finally, the Commonwealth's many associations offer huge potential for sharing best practice and mutual support. The Commonwealth can provide a platform for this to flourish.

The Commonwealth family can play a unique and important role in international development. I am confident that it can carve out a clear role in the 21st century; but to achieve this, it must continue its journey of reforming and renewing. The Commonwealth can count on our strong support for this.

THE VALUE OF INTER- PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY

All Parliamentarians have an obligation to work with their Commonwealth colleagues to improve the performance of their own Assemblies by sharing experiences and pooling ideas to help all nations along the path to democratic development and stability, says a senior Member of the British House of Commons.

Rt Hon. Jack Straw, MP.

Mr Straw has a been Member of Parliament for Blackburn since May 1979. He was last re-elected at the general election in May 2010, with an increased majority of 9,856. Mr Straw served continuously on the Labour Front Bench for 30 years- from November 1980 until October 2010. While in government he served successively as Home Secretary (1997-2001), Foreign Secretary (2001-2006), Leader of the Commons (2006-7), and then Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary (2007-2010).

U.S President Barack Obama said during his recent speech in the Houses of Parliament that: "As we enter this new chapter in our shared history, profound challenges stretch before us. In a world where the prosperity of all nations is now inextricably linked, a new era of co-operation is required to ensure the growth and stability of the global economy."

I fully endorse those words and share the President's vision of a global future in which every nation's future is of mutual concern and where the failure of one state is a failure of all others. To play our part in fulfilling this ideal we must continue to support democracy and freedom wherever it takes form.

Within this mission to create a safer and more prosperous world the sharing of ideas is critical. In this regard the importance of effective inter-parliamentary dialogue and co-operation is clear. Through best practice and learning from mistakes we can strengthen the roots of democracy and support those who aspire to a better future.

This work is no-where better illustrated than in that done by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

The CPA has grown over the last 100 years from its original structure, with six members, to its current day incarnation which has one hundred and 75 branches. Thus, the CPA has an impressive reach across the globe and into the parliamentary institutions of countless Commonwealth countries. This reach has long been, and indeed is of course still, used to great effect.

The link the CPA provides between MPs in Westminster and our colleagues across the Commonwealth is a vital one and the open discourse it promotes in both directions is of considerable value. The CPA encourages these inter-parliamentary exchanges and dialogues through conferences and seminars. As just one example of these types of discussions the CPA UK hosted a meeting last November in Westminster to discuss the principles and structures of governance in



Rt Hon. Jack Straw, MP.

parliamentary democracies. The delegates to this meeting included over 50 parliamentarians from Commonwealth countries such as Nigeria, Pakistan, Dominica and Malaysia.

The CPA is also very active in the organization of bilateral delegations. Take, for instance, a recent programme the CPA organized, as part of their parliamentary strengthening activities, which saw a Rwandan delegation arrive in October last year. The opportunity this delegation provided, including trips to Westminster, the Northern Ireland Assembly and to a U.K.



Member of Parliament's constituency, will have long-term benefits in Rwanda, which, I understand, is the newest member of the CPA, having joined in 2010.

The Rwandan Parliament, born only 17 years ago in aftermath of the bloody civil war, will certainly have gained great experience and knowledge from the Parliamentarians who attended sessions during their visit. These included discussion sessions on: the role of the speaker; the work of committees; gender and youth representation in Parliament; and promoting sustainable peace and security.

These types of exchanges, which bring together politicians, the academic world, business and civil society, are invaluable and do much to strengthen the bonds of democracy around the world. In 2005 a Palestinian delegation visited the U.K. Parliament through the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the delegation included the Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Rawhi Fattouh. Following that trip I met with Mr Fattouh while in Palestine during my time as Foreign Secretary. I was able to hear from him first-hand the positive impact these types of trips

The Parliament of Rwanda; the Commonwealth's newest Member.

can have; not just in the encouragement they provide, but in the genuine transfer of knowledge that takes place.

The dialogue these exchanges create is also vital in enabling groups such as the CPA to set up and maintain longer-term programmes. These sustained relationships will then, hopefully, result both in stronger partnerships and enhanced co-operation throughout the Commonwealth. Examples of these long-term programmes can be seen in the work CPA UK has been doing with countries such as Uganda and Botswana.

Of course, Winston Churchill was correct when he argued that, "no one pretends democracy is perfect or all-wise". Indeed, there is no single place the world can look to for the final word on best practice and democratic good governance. What we can do, however, and what groups like the CPA play an important role in, is in learning from both successes and failures made in other countries

and by having fresh eyes observe our Parliament and its functions. Through inter-parliamentary co-operation and dialogue best practice can be identified and enshrined, while mistakes can be highlighted and their repetition avoided.

As just one example let me highlight the visit last year of a Commonwealth observation team which travelled to the U.K. to monitor the general and local elections. This trip, which was jointly organized by the CPA UK and the Royal Commonwealth Society, involved a team of 11 Parliamentarians and civil society observers from Commonwealth countries which included Malaysia, Bangladesh and Nigeria. During their stay the group were able to observe polling stations, the general and local election counts and then brought these experiences together by holding a seminar to produce a final report. This document detailed a list both of their observations and also of their recommendations on how to improve the conduct of elections in future.

The experience of seeing an 'old' democracy, such as the U.K., conduct what is now the routine of going to the polls will hopefully have provided much in terms of good practice. On the other hand, with long queues around the block at close of polling in many places last year, I am sure the groups' experiences also highlighted a number of things not to follow. However, it is through the mutual exchange of ideas, involving the identification of mistakes and the sharing of best practice, that we can help improve democracy here in the U.K. and assist others in enshrining it around the world.

British foreign policy weaves together many different approaches and strategies. Among these inter-parliamentary exchanges can be a vital contribution to our long-term vision of entrenching and supporting democracy and freedom around

the world. The recent events in the Middle East and North Africa have shown what passion and thirst there is for democracy in places where the freedoms we enjoy here in the U.K. are the object of brave and sometimes fatal demonstrations. As new and fragile democratic institutions emerge we must support these bodies and ensure that mistakes that have been made here can be avoided there and that good practice from around the world is shared and implemented early.

The trajectory of global politics is, in my view, clear and can be illustrated by the history of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association itself. An organization originally supported by six countries in 1911 has now seen 50 new Parliaments and Legislatures join or rejoin in the last 10 years alone. Imagine the difference, for instance, in Rwandan politics from those early years after the end of the civil war in 1994 to the parliamentary institutions the delegation, full of fresh ideas from their visit to the UK, returned to late last year.

In the years to come, as the Arab Spring has so clearly underlined, the list of parliamentary democracies will rise while the number of dictators and autocrats falls. It is our obligation, manifested in the work of groups like the CPA, to support, to encourage and both to pass on ideas and learn from the new experiences of the fledgling democracies currently in existence and those that are yet to be established.

If we can increase and improve inter-parliamentary dialogue and co-operation we will have played a small, yet important part, in helping to fulfil President Obama's prophesy that, "in the long years to come, not only will the people of this island but...the world, wherever the bird of freedom chirps in the human heart, look back to what we've done, and they will say 'do not despair, do not yield...march straightforward'".



MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS: WHAT MORE SHOULD COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARIANS BE DOING?

Time is running out for governments to meet the deadline they set to make the world a significantly better place for all people, says one of the United Kingdom's leading international experts. The Commonwealth and its Parliamentarians must rise to this challenge.

Baroness O'Loan, DBE

Baroness O'Loan, DBE, is a Member of the House of Lords. She was Ireland's Roving Ambassador for Conflict Resolution, Special Envoy to Timor Leste, and for UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace and Security in addition to being the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. She has served on a number of public bodies over some 20 years in areas as diverse as the European Union, health, transport, policing, human rights and energy.

Introduction

There are just four years to go until 2015 - the date for the achievement of the eight Millennium Development Goals. There is constant monitoring of progress and recent analysis shows the following broad level of achievement with reference to each Goal:

- **Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger:** the picture here is mixed. The situation overall has improved very much in that the percentage of the world's population living in extreme poverty (Below U.S.\$1.25 per day) has fallen from 42 per cent to 25 per cent largely due to improvements in China, but in sub-Saharan Africa it still remains above 50 per cent.
- **Achieve Universal Primary Education:** the picture here is much improved in that globally primary school enrolment rose to 88 per cent in 2007. However significant numbers of children drop out, due to cost, conflict and other difficulties.

- **Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women:** There was little improvement here. Girls still face discrimination in access to education, and while more women are working they tend to have low paid and vulnerable jobs. The proportion of women engaged in national politics globally is still only 17 per cent. Some of the highest levels of participation are to be found in post-conflict countries.
- **Reduce Child Mortality:** there has been real achievement here in that the number of children dying before they reach five has reduced from 12 million to around nine million. However there is still huge work to do to achieve the target.
- **Improve Maternal Health and reduce the maternal mortality rate:** there has been little progress here – over 500,000 women die each year, many of them in sub-Saharan Africa.
- **Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria & Other Diseases:** the levels of Aids related deaths and new HIV



Baroness O'Loan.

infections are stabilising and in some areas reducing. However levels are still very high. The incidence of malaria related deaths and TB cases is falling but maintaining this requires significant ongoing funding.

- **Ensure Environmental Sustainability:** levels of access to drinking water are on target, but other indicators show serious failing in reaching this Goal with rising CO2 levels in many countries, 80 per cent over-



Children in Delhi receiving free food. While there has been some improvement, much more needs to be done to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

September 2010 acknowledged, "it falls far short of which is needed."

Nevertheless they went on to say

*"We are convinced that the Millennium Development Goals can be achieved, including in the poorest countries, with renewed commitment, effective implementation and intensified collective action by all Member States and other relevant stakeholders at both the domestic and international levels, using national development strategies and appropriate policies and approaches that have proved to be effective, with strengthened institutions at all levels, increased mobilization of resources for development, increased effectiveness of development cooperation and an enhanced global partnership for development."*¹²

A positive, constructive and respectful relationship between donors and developing countries is fundamental to the achievement of the MDGs. The 54 members of the Commonwealth and their two billion citizens are pledged to work together towards shared goals in democracy and development. The U.K. government has committed itself to a new programme of aid, which has auditable targets, consistent with the MDG targets and indicators, such as:

- Providing more than 50 million people with the means to work their way out of poverty;
- Securing schooling for 11 million children;
- Saving the lives of 50,000 women in pregnancy and childbirth;
- Stopping 250,000 newborn babies dying needlessly;
- Giving 15 million people access to clean drinking water; and
- Improving access to sanitation for 25 million people.

exploitation of fish, and ongoing deforestation.

▪ **Develop a Global Partnership for Development:** This goal is still only an aspiration. Globally countries are giving only 0.3 per cent of their Gross National Income as opposed to the target of 0.7 per cent. Mobile phone usage is spreading rapidly, but internet access remains largely unavailable.¹ However there are many examples of key private

sector organizations engaging in developmental work which benefits both the company and the area in which it operates.

Much progress has therefore been made in terms of individual countries and individual goals. There are very clear targets and indicators through which such progress can be achieved and measured. Some countries in all parts of the world, including sub-

Saharan Africa, are reporting significant progress, although some also report an inability to sustain what has been achieved for example in the use of malaria nets, which are provided, but are not consistently used. Huge levels of resources have been dedicated to securing progress. However, as the Heads of State and Government at their meeting at United Nations Headquarters in New York in



This page: Vast improvements are needed to promote gender equality; primary school education on the other hand has improved (right).



This identification of specific outcomes represents an enhanced way of measuring the impact of aid projects - one which will focus on the outcomes of initiatives in terms of actual people helped, thereby making it possible to determine which projects have actually delivered for the people on the ground, and to focus available resources more effectively.

Commonwealth countries, like other countries across the world, have experienced varying degrees of conflict. At the present time more than 42 million people are displaced globally, either internally or as refugees as a consequence of conflict or persecution.

Countries emerging from or engaged in conflict face additional challenges - people who have lived in and with fear for so many years are subject to levels of trauma which cannot be under-estimated, and which have the capacity to impact adversely on all attempts to engender development. Yet conflict resolution and state building do not form any part of the MDGs. Without adequate security it is impossible to achieve all these necessary goals.

Development initiatives can actually be a cause of conflict among peoples, as there can be perceived and on occasion real disparity in provision. Countries

should conduct ongoing risk analysis to ensure that the strategies adopted in pursuance of the MDGs are buttressed by adequate provision for security, and do not add to or create conflict. They could also ensure the provision of early warning/early response mechanisms to identify and deal with local conflict before it becomes a real inhibitor of genuine progress.

Countries which have developed clear development plans should be able to ensure that donors target their aid in compliance with the recipient countries' strategic aims. Governments have expressed their

frustration at donor planning which excludes those responsible for the development of a whole country, and which provides a contribution which may be neither most effectively located nor capable of necessary maintenance and resourcing. Donors must recognise and respect the Country's national plans.

Clear objectives

It is also profoundly important that, in the process of seeking to achieve these Goals, countries do all they can to ensure that all contributions and initiatives are underpinned by clear objectives so that in so far as it is possible,



resources are used to secure maximum capacity building in the host country. Whilst it is laudable for aid donors to build roads, schools and hospitals, if they do so using imported labour, the consequence will be that there may be no development of local capacity which will enable the host country to build in the future.

The partnership of imported labour and local labour is a fundamental necessity, even where the consequence may be to delay the completion of the project.

One of the consequences of not using local labour is that resentment and hostility to those who come as donors may also emerge. The development of engineering, construction, medical, technical, educational and other skills and competences to enable sustainable progress is vital. It can be achieved through programmes of education, but there is a real possibility of combining development and education at, on occasion, minimal cost to the donor with disproportionate benefit to the recipient country. Partnership is key to progress

The level of discrimination and marginalization of women is well documented across many countries in the world. We know that globally:

- Women perform two-thirds of the world's work;
- Women earn one tenth of the world's income;
- Women are two-thirds of the world's illiterates;
- Women own less than one hundredth of the world's property.³

The contribution of women is clear in the extent to which they provide homes, education, food, and contribute to the common good.

The extent to which that contribution could be developed in the interests of nation states is significant.

Countries should, therefore, also ensure that there is a clear link between the strategy to achieve the MDGs and the strategy to comply with obligations imposed by the UN Security Council Resolutions

(1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889), which are designated to achieve the participation of women in public and local life, their protection from violence and the creation of fair and effective judicial, legal and security systems, and the incorporation of the gender perspective in policy and law-making.

The achievement of the priorities identified in the MDGs is fundamental to country development.

As hunger is tackled, as sickness levels and maternal and infant mortality are reduced through health programmes and the provision of clean water and sanitation, as access to education improves and as women are enabled to take their rightful place in the world in which they live, the inevitable result will be enhanced levels of economic activity, increased stability and a general rise in people's standards of living.

Central to all this is the necessity for a determined global effort by all governments to deal with corruption in all its forms, and

to ensure that resources are used for the purpose for which they are intended, rather than being siphoned off into private coffers.

Challenges ahead

The challenge for the Commonwealth is to ensure that it fulfils its commitment in its overall strategic plan delivering on the two Goals of Peace and Democracy and Pro-Poor Growth and Sustainable Development,⁴ thus enabling maximum specific achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in as many countries as possible by 2015. This is no small challenge, but much has already been achieved, much can still be achieved.

Endnotes:

1. Report of the Committee on Development to the European Parliament 19 May 2010. www.europarl.europa.eu
2. Draft Resolution to the UN General Assembly 17 September 2010 www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010/pdf/mdg
3. Aisling Swaine, Transitional Justice Unit, University of Ulster.
4. Commonwealth Secretariat at: www.thecommonwealth.org.



STRENGTHENING THE COMMONWEALTH AND ITS INSTITUTIONS

The Commonwealth and its parliamentary wing must stand up strongly for democratic values and human rights both within member countries and in the operations of the intergovernmental Commonwealth, says a senior MP.

Mr Hugh Bayley, MP

Mr Bayley has been the Labour MP for York since 1992.

He has held many posts, including: Minister in the Department of Social Security (1999-2001); Deputy Speaker (2010); Member of the Commons Health Committee (1992-97); International Development Committee (since 2001); Panel of Chairs (since 2005); Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association U.K. Branch (1997-99, 2001 to date) and its Chair (2006-08). He is a Regional Representative on the CPA Executive Committee.

Introduction

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) should be proud of what it has achieved in its first century, but there is much more we could and should be doing to make a real difference to the Commonwealth and its people. The Commonwealth is very different now to how it was when our association was founded in Westminster a hundred years ago. Unless the CPA reinvents itself so that what it says and does delivers more for the people of the Commonwealth in the 21st century, then I am afraid that the association has no future.

The Commonwealth needs to modernize, in order to address the aspirations of its citizens better than in the past. The CPA should examine what the role of the Commonwealth is and what our contribution could be. Commonwealth institutions should respect and listen to Commonwealth parliamentarians since we are democratically elected representatives of the people, but Ministers and Heads of



Mr Hugh Bayley, MP.

Government will listen to our views only in proportion to how representative, relevant and interesting they are. We must make what we say interesting enough to convince Ministers to listen.

Commonwealth governments need to accept that Parliamentarians' views will sometimes be challenging. There would be little point to dialogue if legislators always agreed with the executive. The Commonwealth is committed to values of democracy, development, human rights, the rule of law and good governance. I believe the Commonwealth and

the CPA could be doing more to safeguard these fundamental principles.

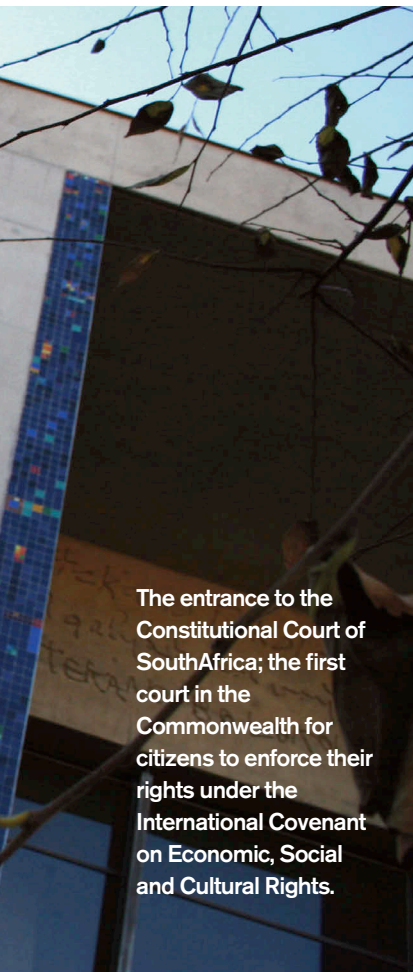
Democracy

The Commonwealth should supplement the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) with new instruments to strengthen democracy and guide member states towards compliance with our shared political values and away from violations before they become so serious that suspension or expulsion follows. There should be gradations of action rather than simply suspension or expulsion.

The Commonwealth should publish a "Democracy Index" to rank Commonwealth states' compliance with our shared political values and highlight problem areas where they exist. The results should be discussed at the annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) every two years, and states should be expected to address problem



Westminster's famous clock towers over Commonwealth flags on Parliament Square .



The entrance to the Constitutional Court of South Africa; the first court in the Commonwealth for citizens to enforce their rights under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

guaranteed comprehensive answers within a specified period of time. The CPC prior to each CHOGM should be briefed on the issues to be discussed and invited to make its own submissions to the Heads of Government, and other meetings at CHOGM.

The Commonwealth Secretariat should report annually to the CPA. It is essential that the Commonwealth Secretariat has a close working relationship with the CPA Secretariat, so that our extensive parliamentary experience can be utilised for the benefit of good governance throughout the Commonwealth.

The CPA does not effectively scrutinise executive decisions within the Commonwealth and is not invited to comment on areas where it has expertise or to contribute to debates at CHOGM or other Commonwealth forums. The CPA should look for ways to involve legislators more closely in

Commonwealth affairs. Parliamentary democracy should be seen as one of the Commonwealth's key strengths, and legislators among its most important stakeholders. Greater support should be provided to building the capacity of Parliaments to hold executives to account.

Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group

These proposals, along with additional ideas on internet governance and access, form the basis of CPA UK's submission to the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group (EPG), made last October. The Commonwealth agreed to set up the EPG at the last CHOGM in Trinidad and Tobago in November 2009 to reinvigorate the Commonwealth and examine options for reform. The group was tasked with sharpening the impact, strengthening the networks and raising the profile of the Commonwealth, so that the Commonwealth will remain relevant in the future. I strongly support these goals.

I submitted my own personal views to the EPG in September. I then submitted a paper to the CPA UK Branch for discussion. Following agreement by the Executive Committee and input from colleagues, a submission was made to the EPG by the CPA UK Branch in October. CPA UK recognizes the need for the Eminent Persons Group and endorses its broad guiding principles "to ensure the Commonwealth will remain relevant to its times and people in future" and "to build a stronger and more resilient and progressive family of nations founded on enduring values and principles".

The EPG, chaired by former Malaysian Prime Minister Mr Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, has met four times since July 2010 and will present its recommendations at the next CHOGM in Australia in

October 2011. It is expected to publish a draft report before then. The EPG has already stated that it will recommend proposals that strengthen the Commonwealth so that democratic values and fundamental human rights are championed. I hope they will support some of the recommendations put forward by CPA UK.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Working Party

The CPA UK Branch submission to the Commonwealth EPG was discussed at the mid-year meeting of the CPA Executive Committee in Yukon. At this meeting, held in February 2011, the Executive Committee decided to refer the CPA UK Branch submission to the CPA Working Party.

The CPA Working Party was established following CPC 2009 in Tanzania, to undertake a comprehensive review of the CPA and look into the reforms that are needed to ensure the CPA continues to be a vital and relevant inter-parliamentary organization. It will make recommendations on the reinvigoration of the CPA, so that it continues to be seen by branches and the public as relevant to the needs of its members and to the advancement of democratic parliamentary governance. Again, these are aims that I strongly support. The Working Party expects to make its final recommendations at CPC 2012.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference 2011

It is a very important year for the CPA, as CPC 2011 marks the centennial of the founding of our original association in Westminster in 1911. CPA UK looks forward to hosting the fifty-seventh CPC in London on the theme "Reinforcing Democracy", where I am sure there will be opportunities to discuss many of the themes I have outlined.

CPC 2011 gives us the chance

to plan the future direction of the CPA over the next one hundred years. The Commonwealth and the CPA cannot remain as they are. Our association must adapt to become fit for purpose for the 21st century. CPA UK intend this year's CPC to be substantive and produce real outcomes that delegates can take back to their legislatures and constituents, in order to strengthen parliamentary democracy throughout the Commonwealth.

The exchange of views between Commonwealth parliamentarians is beneficial because it enables us to learn from each other and develop good governance and policy practices. However, this should be extended beyond the conference and I have already outlined my views on how this can be achieved.

Conclusion

The CPA must redefine where it stands and emphasize what it adds to the advancement of parliamentary governance within the Commonwealth.

As the CPA enters its second century, it needs to find a stronger and clearer voice and do more to remain relevant to the Commonwealth. I believe that the CPA should require the fundamentals of democracy to be effectively observed in all Parliaments, whether large or small. I hope that the views of the CPA UK Branch will be seriously considered by both the Commonwealth EPG and the CPA Working Party and inform their final recommendations.

It is essential that the CPA works together to promote our shared values and to become more relevant to citizens in our countries. If the CPA does not reform, it risks becoming irrelevant.

The more the CPA works together to make a real difference to the everyday lives of people in Commonwealth countries, the stronger the association will be in the future.



THE CPA AND THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS – A HUMAN RIGHTS TOOL FOR PARLIAMENTARIANS

Commonwealth Parliamentarians can become more active and effective through the CPA in holding their governments to account for adherence to the rule of law and the international human rights framework. The CPA can do more to help Parliamentarians and the Commonwealth institutions to play their part more effectively, argues a Member of the House of Lords.

Baroness Stern.

Baroness Stern has been a Crossbencher (independent) Peer since 1999 and was a Member of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights from 2004 to 2008.

In 2009 she was appointed by the U.K. government to lead a review of how rape complaints are handled from first disclosure until the court reaches a verdict. The Review was published in March 2010.

In 2007 Dr William F. Shija, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), addressed the Twentieth Anniversary Conference of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative. He said:

“CPA in collaboration with human rights NGOs and CHRI [Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative] must play a crucial role in making members aware of the particular duty of parliaments and their members, as guardians of human rights, to defend and promote human rights, and so contribute to building a situation where everyone has civil, economic, social and political rights.”

How seriously do the Commonwealth institutions take the human rights performance of

member states? On 10 December 2010 the Commonwealth Secretary-General Kamalesh Sharma issued a message about the Commonwealth and human rights. The date was significant. It was on 10 December 1948 that the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and since then 10 December has been International Human Rights Day. In his 2010 message the Secretary-General said;

Spotlight on Human Rights

Human rights – based on dignity, equality and non-discrimination – are central to the Commonwealth’s values, and its Heads of Government encouraged it to promote and protect them further, when they last met in Port of Spain in November 2009. Defending human rights and ending



Baroness Stern.

discrimination ... falls ultimately to governments. And – across the globe – political commitments on human rights often fall short of reality.²

Human rights are indeed central to the values of the Commonwealth. The Heads of Government asserted this in Port of Spain in 2009 when they said that the countries of the



Commonwealth are bound together... 'by an ethos of respect for all states and peoples, of shared values and principles, and of concern for the vulnerable.'³ Victims of human rights abuses are most often the poor, the marginalised, the socially excluded and those who suffer unlawful discrimination. It is these people who suffer from entrenched patterns of inequality and face assaults on their dignity and humanity. And, in the words of Dr Shija,

"The human rights framework – of unqualified adherence to the tenets of peace and justice, universal respect for the dignity of the human being, inclusiveness and non-discrimination – has become

an indicator for political performance at home and abroad."⁴

Whilst promoting human rights and the rule of law have in the past not been high on the Commonwealth agenda, recent years have seen an increase in Commonwealth human rights activity, both at the level of the Commonwealth Secretariat and in member states. The Secretary-General has addressed the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva,⁵ discussed future cooperation with the Secretary General of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie,⁶ signed a Joint Declaration on enhanced cooperation and partnership on human rights with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights⁷

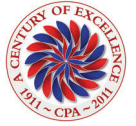
and has given an address urging governments to strengthen commitments to eliminate gender-based discrimination.⁸

In addition the Commonwealth Secretariat's small but very hard-working Human Rights Unit produces an annual status report, Human Rights in the Commonwealth. The second of these reports, published in December 2010, gives information for each member state on ratifications of the UN core conventions, whether there is a national human rights institution such as a human rights commission, whether the state continues to use the death penalty, and what Commonwealth Secretariat initiative the member state has participated in during that

Defence of Human Rights Chairperson Ms Amna Janjua (second from right) and leader Mr Qazi Hussain Ahmed (third from left) lead a protest rally in Islamabad.

year. The report also highlights initiatives on disability. The Status reports are a useful source of basic information although their usefulness is much diminished as they are not available on line and paper copies have to be ordered and paid for.

The Commonwealth already has some overarching human rights structures in operation that could form the basis of a new CPA initiative. The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) is based in New Delhi with offices in



London and Accra. It is 'is a non-partisan independent international non-governmental organization' ... 'born out of an awareness that although Commonwealth countries have shared legal principles and values, little had been done to set human rights standards within the association

itself or to promote a culture of human rights.⁹

Every two years CHRI produces a report on an issue of human rights concern in the Commonwealth which is presented to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).¹⁰

The former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Hon. Patrick Manning (left), and the Secretary-General of the CPA, Dr William F. Shija during CHOGM in Port-of-Spain, 2009.

Also, the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRI) is part of the Commonwealth Secretariat and is made up of statutory national human rights bodies.

The Forum 'is premised on the commitment to political and human rights values with which the Commonwealth is widely associated!'¹¹ So far however only 29 member states have a national human rights institution.¹²

The Commonwealth Secretariat has been very active in assisting member states with the process of the Universal Periodic Review.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a the process which involves a review of the human rights records of all 192 UN Member States once every four years.

The UPR provides the opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfil their human rights obligations. Many Commonwealth countries have already put forward their reviews in 2011 and there is much in these to welcome.

Mozambique for instance reported an increase in the percentage of women in parliament from 28 per cent in 1994 to 42 per cent in 2004, one of the highest percentages in the world.¹³

Namibia's judiciary handed down a number of judgements upholding individual rights, including the rights of people with HIV/AIDS and the rights of defendants to legal representation provided by the State.¹⁴

In Australia an agreement is in place to take measures to close the significant gap in opportunities and life chances between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.¹⁵

The Government of Sierra Leone has created the first public service broadcaster in Africa and



every shade of opinion is allowed to propagate its ideas.¹⁶

In Singapore, to secure equal rights for disabled people, all public flats have been built with wheelchair-accessible toilets, switches and sockets and by 2011, all public housing estates will be barrier-free, facilitating wheelchair access to public areas.¹⁷

In St Lucia, whilst corporal punishment of children remains in place in the law, progress is being made in phasing it out in schools.¹⁸

Human Rights Committees

These are all government initiatives but were no doubt the result of some campaigning by active Parliamentarians.

Another way Parliaments come to be directly involved in human rights is through parliamentary human rights committees and there are parliamentary human rights committees in Mozambique, Zambia, Cameroon, Canada, Cyprus, Sierra Leone, Pakistan and Rwanda. Australia has a bill to set up such a committee before the Senate currently and the establishment of such a committee has also been recommended in New Zealand.

These committees hold government to account on its human rights obligations and keeping Parliamentarians up to date on human rights issues.

The CPA has thousands of members. Many of them are active on human rights questions in their own parliaments, in their own countries and internationally.

This is a huge resource to draw on. A way for the CPA to make its contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights in the Commonwealth might be for it to work to assist national Parliaments and to foster collaboration and mutual support between Parliaments in working for human rights.

To give this work coherence and a focus the CPA tool for making this happen could be the

production of an annual Commonwealth Human Rights Index, produced by the CPA and for the use of the CPA. Currently there is no such document. The vast amount of information on the human rights performance of the 54 Commonwealth countries is as yet not collated and put into a format where each country's performance can be seen and progress monitored.

One way of ensuring the production of such a report would be for the CPA to establish a regionally representative Human

“Many Commonwealth countries have already put forward their reviews in 2011 and there is much in these to welcome.”

Rights Group to prepare an annual Commonwealth Human Rights report for the CPA.

The Group could be coordinated by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and have a CPA member from each region.

Preparing such an annual report need not be costly. It requires a compilation of information from already published sources and might well concentrate on those matters of particular relevance to Parliamentarians, such as the rule of law, gender equality and the human rights performance of government institutions.

The annual report could be presented at the CPA conference and be debated. Since no country has a perfect human rights record

every country present would be found to have some human rights failings as well as some excellent practice.

CPA delegations can undertake to raise the report with their governments and hold them to account on taking remedial action.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association should also formally receive the report, and encourage its branches in national Parliaments to act on its findings by raising them with their governments.

Conclusion

Human rights promotion has not as yet played a large part in the deliberations of Commonwealth institutions in spite of the huge achievements of some Commonwealth countries in taking forward the human rights agenda worldwide. South Africa for example has a constitution and a constitutional court that have set a standard other countries struggle to reach.

India has a National Human Rights Commission and state human rights commissions that are models for others to emulate.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms gives guarantees to its citizens that would be appropriate everywhere.

The CPA has much to build on in promoting human rights and it is time for a new initiative.

Endnotes:

1. Shija, W. (2008) "What can Parliamentarians, NGOs and CHRI do for the Commonwealth over the next twenty years?" in Human Rights and Human Wrongs: The Continuing Commonwealth Challenge." New Delhi: CHRI
2. Message from Commonwealth Secretary-General Kamallesh Sharma on International Human Rights Day <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/press/177370/232561/101210humanrightsdaysatement.htm>
3. From "Affirmation of Commonwealth Values and Principles" <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/docume>

[nt/34293/35468/216908/commonwealt_h_values_and_principles.htm](http://www.thecommonwealth.org/news/191183/210650/234593/020311sgunhrc.htm)

4. Shija, W. (2008) "What can Parliamentarians, NGOs and CHRI do for the Commonwealth over the next twenty years?" in Human Rights and Human Wrongs: The Continuing Commonwealth Challenge." New Delhi: CHRI

5. "Commonwealth Secretary General addresses UN Human Rights Council <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/news/191183/210650/234593/020311sgunhrc.htm>

6. "La Francophonie, Commonwealth Secretaries-General meet in Paris" <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/news/191183/210650/223494/070510lafrancophonie.htm>

7. "Sharma to address High-Level segment of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva" <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/news/190707/163085/220627/260210geneva.htm>

8. "Gender equality is crucial to key development goals – Commonwealth Secretary-General" <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/news/191183/210650/234771/070311sgmessage.htm>

9. http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=49&Itemid=505

10. Website: <http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/>

11. Website: <http://www.commonwealthnhri.org/>

12. <http://www.commonwealthnhri.org/FNHRInformation/185652/members/>

13. UN General Assembly (2010) National report submitted in accordance with paragraph

14. UN General Assembly (2011) National report submitted in accordance with paragraph

15. UN General Assembly (2011) National report submitted in accordance with paragraph

16. UN General Assembly (2011) National report submitted in accordance with paragraph

17. UN General Assembly (2011) National report submitted in accordance with paragraph

18. UN General Assembly (2011) National report submitted in accordance with paragraph.

FORMING A WORKING COALITION GOVERNMENT

Britain's first-past-the-post electoral system usually produces a majority government. It did not in 2010, so the major parties entered what was for them new ground: forming a coalition to govern.



Ms Anne MacIntosh, MP.

Ms MacIntosh was elected to the new Constituency of Thirsk, Malton and Filey after a delayed election on 27 May 2010. She also previously served as Vice-Chairman of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association U.K. Branch.

Rt Hon. David Laws, MP.

Mr Laws joined the Liberal Democrats as an economic adviser, and eventually became the party's Director of Policy and Research. He was one of the lead negotiators for the Liberal Democrats who helped to agree the coalition deal with the Conservatives in May 2010.

Ms MacIntosh

On 6 May 2010, the outcome of the general election was inconclusive. No one party reached a majority in the House of Commons. The Conservative Party gained the largest number of seats, but could not form a government on its own.

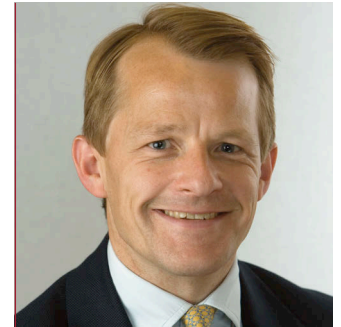
It was a rare example of the first past the post system producing an unusual result with no majority. However, the result strongly reflected the mood of the country. I know this perhaps better than any other current Member of Parliament.

As the coalition was being formed by amongst others my co-author David Laws who was heavily involved in its formation, I was still campaigning in my constituency to be returned to the House of Commons.

In early April and during the first week of the campaign, the UKIP Candidate for Thirsk Malton and Filey very sadly passed away. In such an event, there is an



Ms Anne MacIntosh, MP.



Rt Hon. David Laws, MP.

immediate delay to the campaign while the candidate is mourned and their party is allowed to select a successor candidate. Inevitably the search for a new candidate delays the election date in that constituency and our election night in Thirsk Malton and Filey was three weeks after the rest of the country on 27 May.

During the course of the delayed and extended campaign, the mood canvassing on the doorstep and in the market squares was very positive, even

amongst supporters of the Liberal Democrats as the Coalition was being formed. The fact that two parties were joining together in the national interest to form a government captured the public mood. The usual scenario of two main parties, one in government the other opposition was one for which the electorate were tiring.

What the formation meant in practice was very radical. There were fewer opportunities for Conservative Members, who in opposition had been Shadow



Ministers, to serve in the government, in order to make way for Liberal Democrats. In each Department, it was agreed as far as possible that there should be one Liberal Democrat Minister to ensure that Members from both parties were included in the decisions from every Department. The main ideas from both manifestos were thrashed out by senior Members from both parties into what then became the Coalition Agreement.

As a member of the Chairman's Panel, I see firsthand how extremely hard the Coalition Government has to work to ensure its legislative programme is passed, as there is no majority in Legislative Bill Committees and Delegated Legislation Committees. There is normally only a very narrow majority of one or two.

Westminster politics is often felt to be too confrontational and that MPs should be able to work together and put aside their differences. This is a positive aspect of this new style of Coalition Government, demonstrating that two parties can work together in a responsible manner and in the national interest.

A good example of this has been the Political and Constitutional Reform Bill, where both parties have worked together to include each other's policies in this legislation. This Bill was recently passed despite a difficult and lengthy passage through the Lords.

During my delayed general election campaign, I found that many people liked some of the reforms that were included in the Bill. In particular they were enthusiastic about having fewer MPs.

The Bill makes provision for reducing the number of MPs by ten per cent which will result in about 50 fewer Members in Parliamentary elections from 2015. Before this can happen, the Boundaries Commission will go through a lengthy process of

reviewing the Constituency sizes in order to make them fairer and more equal in size.

Also contained in this Bill is the referendum on introducing the Alternative Vote system which the Liberal Democrats favour. This was part of the Coalition Agreement and we have made good on our promise to include it.

This referendum campaign is a good opportunity to demonstrate that we are still two separate parties.

I do not support the Alternative Vote system and shall be campaigning against its introduction as it is complicated, expensive and produces unfair outcomes. The best example of this is Ed Miliband, who was elected leader of the Labour Party on the fourth preferences of the least popular candidate in a five-horse race.

The Coalition has brought about many changes to the way in which MPs work at Westminster for both those serving in government and those on the back benches, with the introduction of a Backbench Business Committee and elections for select committee Chairmen. Importantly though, the Coalition has prioritised tackling the budget deficit as the single most important issue facing our country, and continues to govern in the national interest following years of Labour's economic irresponsibility.

Mr Laws

I have to admit that I was so absorbed, firstly in my own campaign for re-election in Yeovil Constituency, and then in the post election coalition negotiations, that I did not realize that poor Anne was still having to fight her election campaign weeks after the rest of us had returned to Westminster! That is not an easy prospect for any candidate, and doubtless the experiences of 2010 will be seared into Anne's mind for years to come.

I will also not forget the General Election of 2010, which was

notable both for the "Leader Debates", in which Rt Hon. Nick Clegg, MP, performed so well, and also for its "Hung Parliament" result and for the subsequent negotiations.

Mr Clegg had in 2009 established a team to negotiate with the other parties, in the event of a hung Parliament, and this team met on a number of occasions in early 2010 in order to plan in detail for a scenario where no party had an overall majority. We also met, in secret, towards the end of the General Election campaign in order to finalize our plans.

Mr Clegg had made clear during the General Election that we would talk first to the Party with the biggest mandate – quite rightly, we had avoided saying whether this meant seats or votes, and it seemed likely that one party would tick both boxes on this occasion. But he had also avoided committing us only to talking with one other party, and our assumption was always that we would listen and talk to both the Conservatives and Labour if a coalition could be formed with either.

Our first meeting with Rt Hon. David Cameron's team was on the Friday evening after Thursday's election.

The Conservative team, led by Rt Hon. William Hague, MP, was well prepared, very positive, and easy to do business with.

When we met the Labour team over the next few days, they turned out to be notably less ready to do business, and it was also clear that their team was split about the desired outcome to their talks with us.

It was already going to be tough enough to form a Coalition with Labour, given the electoral arithmetic in the House of Commons. Labour's intransigence and division made this option impossible.

Meanwhile, my Party colleagues and I were of the clear view that a stable coalition

government was both necessary to sort out the economic mess which we had inherited, and also desirable if we were to increase our chances of delivering the central policies which were set out in our manifesto.

The talks with the Conservatives turned out to be more constructive than either side expected, and by the Tuesday after election day a coalition had been formed, and Mr Cameron became Britain's new Prime Minister.

Since then, the Coalition of two parties which had previously seen each other as bitter political rivals has operated incredibly well. There has been a close working relationship of trust between the Prime Minister and Mr Clegg, and between Liberal Democrats and Conservatives in the Cabinet, in ministerial posts, and amongst MPs.

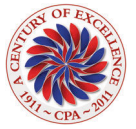
There has also been an absence of either party briefing against the other which has been refreshing and even surprising.

Of course, the glue which initially held the Coalition together was the imperative of sorting out the budget deficit and restoring economic stability. A strategy for both is now in place.

But the extent of a shared agenda goes far wider than this to include schools reform and the pupil premium, pensions reform, devolution of power, action on the environment, and tackling unemployment.

It has been a difficult time for the Liberal Democrats to be in government for the first time in decades, because of the tough decisions necessary on public spending.

But shaping the future is better than throwing stones from the sidelines, and Liberal Democrats can see that our policies are now being delivered in government for the first time in living memory. One year into the Coalition, that is something for us to celebrate, and is – we believe – also good for Britain.



LORDS A-LEAPING – BUT WHICH WAY?

One of the most senior British Parliamentarians argues that any future reform of the House of Lords may make it a more democratic Chamber, but it will not likely make it a more effective or expert one.

Rt Hon. Lord Howe of Aberavon, CH, QC

Lord Howe is a lawyer and a politician. He was born at Port Talbot in 1926 and joined Edward Heath’s government as Solicitor General in 1970. Lord Howe also served in Margaret Thatcher’s government as Chancellor of the Exchequer (1979-83), Foreign Secretary (1983-89) and Deputy Prime Minister (1989-90). He was made a life Peer in 1992 .

The United Kingdom is certainly not the only Commonwealth country to enjoy the benefit of two “Houses of Parliament”. No less than 18 others (mainly the larger and older countries – Australia, Nigeria, India, Pakistan and South Africa, for example) have roughly similar partnerships. However the Lords, the “Upper House”, is the one currently attracting the most attention. For so-called “Reform” of the Lords was placed upon the agenda by all three of the major parties in the last general election campaign.

Yet that view is not shared by a number of the most experienced politicians – and certainly not by a majority in the House of Lords itself. Not least, I think, because we are more aware of the historic roots of the institution – and of the step-by-step process which has led to the dominant qualities of the present establishment.

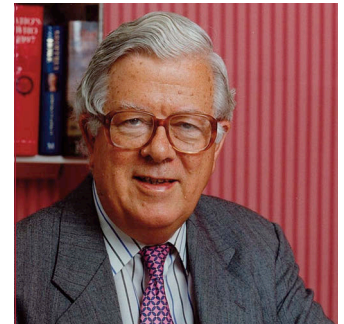
If we are to understand the foundation of those distinct enduring qualities, we shall be best served by studying the historic process, which has led to the

emergence of today’s House. It has been in the news a lot lately. Just why has that happened? And is it a good thing? The answer to that is quite a long story.

Background

The Lords (or Barons, as they all were then) first acquired power as long ago as 1215 AD, when they compelled King John to sign the Magna Carta (Britain’s first charter of human rights). Then, when “Parliament” was created (by Simon de Montfort, in 1265,) the “House” of Commons (with members, in due course, being elected by the people) came into existence, alongside the “House of Lords” – whose membership was almost entirely “hereditary” (father was followed by son). And both Houses came to enjoy much the same power as each other.

Centuries were to pass before it became clear that that was an unbalanced arrangement, because – unsurprisingly, when one looks back on it – the hereditaries turned into an almost built-in, and dominant, Conservative majority.



Rt Hon. Lord Howe of Aberavon.

But the Commons were able – with the support of the Monarch, as was necessary – in two “bites”, in 1911 and 1949, to ensure that their decisions were over-riding, with the Lords retaining nothing more than a right to delay the Commons decisions for just 12 months.

However there have since then been big changes, which have enormously strengthened the membership of the Lords – and thus persuaded the Commons to accept quite a large proportion of their decisions.

The first of those changes was the “invention” by Prime Minister



Harold Macmillan in 1958 of “Life Peers”. This has made possible the appointment to membership of the Lords of a diversity of independent people of distinction and wide experience. The second set of changes was made by former Prime Minister Tony Blair. Most sweeping of these was the removal of all but 92 of the hereditaries, who had until then largely filled the House. The few now remaining have played a valuable role in securing the

survival of all that is best in the courteous and constructive manners of the old House. Meanwhile, the growing numbers of non-political Life Peers – now nicknamed “Peoples’ Peers” – have intensified the wide expertise and, above all, the independence of most of the Lords.

Strangely enough, as I have mentioned already, all three party Leaders have declared themselves in favour of transforming the Lords – by requiring most, if not all, of its

The House of Lords in session.

Members to be, in future, elected just like Members of the Commons. However not one of them has suggested that this change would improve the diverse, independent and largely expert composition or performance of the Lords as it now is. On the contrary,

they do not (and cannot) point to any one fault that would be corrected by this change, nor to any improvement that would result there-from.

Only a few years ago the Commons Committee on Public Administration concluded that “the principle cause of today’s widespread public disillusionment with our political system” is “the virtually untrammelled control by the executive” of the elected House of Commons. The Committee therefore reached two conclusions:

1. There is a need “to ensure that the dominance of Parliament by the Executive, including the political party machines, is reduced not increased”; and
2. The Second Chamber must be “neither a rival nor a replica of but genuinely complementary to the Commons”, and therefore, “as different as possible”.

On that basis, it surely cannot make sense that the most fundamental change proposed for the Second Chamber – the introduction of elected Members – is the one most likely to extend the influence of “the elective dictatorship”, that so plainly provokes disenchantment with the currently elected House. Let me conclude with one decisive set of facts.

A Lords debate on the NHS (not untypical, although some years ago) featured two Deans of Medical Schools, a dentist, a former GP, two Consultants, a Professor of Nursing, the President of Mencap and a former Director of Age Concern. Almost any other subject would normally attract a comparably qualified cast.

There would be no chance of persuading experienced experts of that kind to stand for election to the Lords. Of course, there is need for some change in the present system, but surely not by making the Lords a carbon copy of the Commons.



A DEMOCRATIC UPPER CHAMBER

A Front Bench Member of the House of Lords argues that it is time for a real change in Britain's bicameral parliamentary system.

Lord Tyler.

Lord Tyler is Liberal Democrat Constitutional Affairs Spokesperson and his party's former Shadow Leader of the House of Commons. He sat on the 2002 Joint Committee on Lords Reform, the 2006 Joint Committee on Conventions and, in 2005, co-authored a report 'Reforming the House of Lords: Breaking the Deadlock' with Rt Hon. Robin Cook, Rt Hon. Sir George Young, Rt Hon. Kenneth Clarke and Dr Tony Wright.



Lord Tyler.

British peculiarities extend far beyond a penchant for milk in tea, and an inveterate desire to discuss the weather. Though British constitutionalists have marched the world over from post-war Germany to the farthest reaches of the Commonwealth, setting up democratic systems and establishing stable constitutions, we have never been brave – let alone rational – enough to take our own medicine.

It is argued that our unwritten constitution should be jealously defended, because it has the ability to change with the times and to adapt to new political circumstances. I have long disagreed with that contention in principle, because I believe constitutions should be fixed rules

by which all play, rather than moveable feasts for governments to alter with the consent only of their own political party.

However there is now a practical, as well as a principled, reason to suppose the old guardians of the unwritten constitution were wrong. Though our political institutions are supposed to evolve with the times, we have one in particular which is permanently at least one century behind. In the 19th and 20th century, it depended on the 18th century principle of heredity. In the 20th and 21st, it relies on the 19th century principle of patronage. It is the House of Lords. A whole House of Parliament peopled variously by appointees of the Prime Minister, by representatives of the established Church, and, still, by a number whose right to sit there is rooted neither in merit nor mandate, but in the circumstances of their birth.

Reforming the House of Lords

Proposals to reform the Lords have come and gone over the past few decades. One in 1968 was famously defeated by an unholy alliance of far-left and far-right, in the formidable shapes of Michael



Foot and Enoch Powell. When New Labour came to power in 1997, it seemed things really could be different. This new, young government would surely not permit the anachronism either of hereditary peerages, or seats in Parliament for good personal friends and generous party donors, to persist any longer. Yet they did.

A majority of hereditary Peers were removed in 1999, but 92 remain. These were left to maintain momentum for what was known then as 'Stage 2 reform', i.e. elections. But the Blair government havered, allowing a Royal Commission, a Joint Select Committee of two Houses, and two further Commons Select Committees to pontificate on the future without moving to action. They published three White Papers but never sought to implement their proposals in law.

The result is a House of Parliament which cannot do its job effectively. For all of the self-satisfied talk in which Members of the present Lords engage, about their expertise and their wisdom and their independence, they suffer a mortal handicap: they do not enjoy the legitimacy of election.



In any event, the House is much-
overrated as an assembly of the
wise and the independent. Mr
Andrew Adonis, a relatively young
Peer appointed by the last
government observes that “most
non-party Peers make little if any
contribution to the House, while
most party appointees are long-
retired former MPs, councillors or
failed Commons candidates.
Almost all are very old and very ‘ex’”.

Opponents of reform often say
that an elected Lords would
“challenge the Commons”. In fact, it
would more often challenge
governments; that after all – as a
House of Parliament – is its job. At
the moment Ministers stand at the
Despatch Boxes in both Houses,
looking at commendable, sensible
amendments the Lords have
proposed and reject them out of
hand. “My Lords, the elected
House must have its way.” In fact,
they mean, “the government must
have its way”.

The relevant Commons Select
Committee concluded eloquently
on this point nine years ago when it
said, “reform is not a zero-sum
game in which advances for one
chamber are inevitably threats to

the other”. The late, and much
missed Robin Cook, one of the
most effective Leaders of the
House of Commons ever, also
summed it up well when he said
we should not “keep the second
Chamber subordinate by keeping it
illegitimate”. That, he added, “would
not only weaken the second
Chamber but undermine
Parliament as a whole”.

Liberals have always said that
concentrating power in the hands
of a few people creates bad
government. We believe in
bicameralism precisely because
governments with a majority in the
House of Commons (usually on a
minority of the popular vote) should
not in our view be allowed the
unfettered right to make law
without recourse to other voices. A
democratically elected second
House of Parliament is an obvious
and vital vehicle for the pluralism
we seek.

We are not alone. All three main
parties committed to reforming the
House of Lords, and introducing
elections, in their 2010 manifestos.
The new government is seeking to
fulfil the commitments almost all
MPs made to their voters just 13
months ago.

The Coalition has taken the
thrust of the proposals which the
various commissions and
committees have made over the
years, and produced a draft Bill and
(another) White Paper which
reflects the broad consensus
which have been reached in the
past. Indeed, their suggestions are
much the same as the then Labour
Justice Secretary, Rt Hon. Jack
Straw, made in his 2008 White
Paper, with cross-party support.

The proposals

The proposals are – in a very
British way – evolutionary. The
Lords would change from a largely
appointed body to a largely elected
one over ten years, with the
process starting at the next
general election in 2015. The
House would be elected in thirds,
on a proportional system – either

STV or open lists – using the
regions which presently make up
European Parliamentary
Constituencies. The largest of
these may be divided up into two.

Members would be elected for
a long 15 year term, and it would be
non-renewable. This is unusual –
indeed perhaps unique – by
international standards, since the
longest term for a second chamber
is presently in France at seven
years. However, it is good
compromise between the
arrangements one might expect if
starting British democracy from
scratch and the status quo, which
sees people appointed for life. A
non-renewable term, and a
provision to ensure that ex-
Members cannot stand
immediately for the House of
Commons, should ensure that
candidates are usually at the end,
not the beginning, of careers and
that their time in the House will
incline to independent thinking,
rather than party loyalty.

The elected Lords may retain a
20 per cent appointed element too.
A small number of appointments to
the second Chamber is not
unusual among the developed
democracies, with Italy, Ireland and
India all enjoying hybrid systems.
Those therefore that worry about
the loss of independent
“Crossbenchers” from the present
House should have their fears
allayed. Many of the present
Members would not leave until
2025 anyway (when the third set
of elections take place), and new
appointments would be made
afterwards, albeit in smaller
numbers. All in all, what is
proposed will bring democracy
within the mould of the present
Lords, maintaining clear
differences between it and the
Commons, while giving it the
authority to do its job properly.

Despite the modest,
incremental nature of these
proposals, there are wailing voices
in the corridors of Westminster.
They holler that the composition of
the Lords cannot be made

legitimate without a fundamental
review of the chamber’s powers. In
short, they want the relationship
between the two Houses codified,
and the abilities of the second
chamber circumscribed beyond
their current limits so that
governments can “get their way”.
What is strange is that those most
exercised by this “necessity”, are
precisely the same people who
argue that the constitution should
be unwritten so that it can evolve
and adapt.

In truth, the relationship
between the two Houses of
Parliament has evolved already.
The Parliament Acts in 1911 and
1949 reduced the Lords’ power, by
removing from them any right to
deal with “supply” (money, in
English) and by ensuring the
Commons could – as a last resort
– override the second Chamber
after one year. That is a perfectly
good framework with which to
work, and subsequent
developments have seen the
House assert itself more often. The
1958 Life Peerages Act and the
1999 House of Lords Act all
emboldened our ennobled
colleagues into standing up more
often to the government of the day.
It is no bad thing, and of course an
elected second Chamber might do
it more often. But to describe such
a prospect as “gridlock”, as many
detractors from reform do, is to
deny international experience.
After all, there are 61 elected
second Chambers in the world and
all seem to manage to challenge
their governments without
undermining the ultimate primacy
of their lower Houses. I never
understand why the British lack
confidence that our own system is
capable of the same.

The Coalition Bill is a once-in-a-
lifetime opportunity to be bolder. It
will make both Houses of
Parliament, together, more
effective in holding the executive to
account, just as Britons
recommended for other
democratic Assemblies the world
over.



TRADITION, PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE: DEVOLUTION AS A MEANS OF STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

Although British colonial administrations set up federal systems of devolved government around the world, it is only relatively recently that devolution arrived in the United Kingdom. A leading Northern Ireland Member of the House of Commons, who sat previously in the Northern Ireland Assembly, argues that U.K. devolution was not done well and needs major reforms.

Rt Hon. Nigel Dodds, OBE, MP

Mr Dodds is the Parliamentary Leader of the Democratic Unionist Party. In 2001 he was elected to Westminster to serve as the Member of Parliament for North Belfast and was re-elected in 2005 and 2010.

In the Northern Ireland Assembly he served as Minister for Social Development (1999 – 2000 and 2001-02), Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (2007-08) and Minister of Finance and Personnel (2008 – 2009). He stepped down from the Assembly in 2010.

It is fair to say that devolution is considered a recent feature of the British constitutional tradition. The Union and Westminster grew by uniting the Crowns and Parliaments of the British Isles, a process of unashamed and open centralization. So at first sight devolution would seem an alien concept to the British form of parliamentary democracy; but this would be an over-simplistic view.

A brief history

Devolution has been an idea that has featured in our constitutional debate in the United Kingdom for over 150 years. In the Victorian era the massive political and legislative workload involved in running the country and the Empire made many consider the need to devolve powers. The fear that such moves would feed separatism at home and abroad was its chief stumbling block, a fear fed by the rise of Irish nationalism and its demands for “Home Rule”.

While 26 counties of Ireland would secede from the Union, the Government of Ireland Act also created the first devolved Parliament within the Union for Northern Ireland. The federalist Walter Long's work on the British constitution led some to expect that the other parts of the United Kingdom would soon follow, but it was not to be.

The rise of Scottish nationalism, on the back of the development of North Sea oil, led to the re-emergence of the idea. However, it failed to energize the Scottish public. The election of the Thatcher government in 1979 and its strong centralist tendencies changed that. Those who disagreed with or wished to dissipate her controversial national policies found strong local government a means to do so (which led to her government abolishing the likes of the Greater London Council). The perceived value of more localized forms of government grew. In



Rt Hon. Nigel Dodds, MP.

Scotland in particular this led to a near policy consensus across the parties and civil society for the creation of a devolved Parliament.

The Unionists of Ulster would have shared the original fears of devolution but accepted the creation of the Stormont Parliament as a necessary compromise to avoid an inevitable full-blown civil war. The direct experience of devolution reduced our fears of it. Unionists too suffered at the hands of Thatcher's



centralism with the imposition of the Anglo-Irish Agreement that granted the Irish government the ability to interfere in internal affairs of Northern Ireland against the will of the majority.

The “Empire”: A devolved institution

The British attachment to a central political institution was kept at home. The Empire itself was a highly devolved institution. Cynics will often make jokes about the size of the government in Britain today, reflecting on how small the Foreign Office was when it apparently ran a quarter of the

world. It didn't. The structures created in the respective countries and colonies ran the Empire.

Also when Britain set about creating democratic structures in what was to become the Commonwealth it often went for the most formalized form of devolution: federalism. It was one of the contradictions of British constitutional tradition that while it remained wedded to a strong central national institution at home, it was perfectly relaxed about, and even preferred, federalism abroad.

Thus devolution has been part of British political discussion and practice for some considerable

time. Beyond devolution being a means of managing the internal tensions of a Union state, its key benefit is responsiveness.

The Victorian concern that Westminster had more responsibilities that it could provide the necessary focus upon still applies today. The Empire is long gone but the areas in which government is now an actor have increased substantially. Also, the way government develops legislation has become an increasingly lengthy and complex process (unnecessarily so, but that argument is a different issue). This hampers its ability to give issues

The Stormont Parliament building in Belfast.



The Northern Ireland Assembly in session.



the level and degree of attention they deserve.

The plus side

There can also be geographical issues. Northern Ireland comprises approximately two per cent of the U.K. population; the ability of the national Parliament to have the necessary time for legislation is a difficulty never mind an opportunity to tailor it to local needs. Devolution provides the opportunity to do just that without losing the benefits of being a participant in and contributor to the larger and greater entity.

Besides legislation, one of the areas on which devolution has had

a clear impact is economic development. In this Assembly term, despite the worst recession in decades, Northern Ireland has produced its best record for inward investment in terms of levels of investment and quantity and quality of jobs. It was having a full-time and focused Enterprise minister, Arlene Foster, that it was able to achieve this. It would simply not have been possible under Direct Rule from London with unaccountable ministers who worked on a part-time basis.

Beyond responsiveness, three fundamental issues that have been falling through the Westminster cracks are European law, foreign

policy and defence. Parliament has an oversight role on the laws and regulations that emanate from Brussels yet they never receive the degree of scrutiny they deserve. Business is immensely frustrated by the burden these regulations place upon them resulting in increased costs and un-competitiveness. Equally, ordinary voters are increasingly angry that when they seek action the answer is “this is out of our control because of European regulations”.

With the expansion of the global market and the corresponding shifts in economic and political power, the relationships and policies the U.K.

pursues are crucial if it is to maintain its position in the Premier League of nations. Yet the mandarins in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have much more control over the direction of policy than the elected politicians and the FCO's definition of the national interest is often highly dubious, e.g. its weakness on Israel.

The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have served to highlight that the prestige and capabilities of our Armed Forces were taken for granted. Years of budgetary mismanagement have been exposed. Worse still this mismanagement led to the systematic neglect of the needs of



the ordinary soldier, sailor and airman. Any successes on the battlefield have been through the dedication and valour of our servicemen and women with the role of the MoD more akin to that of a fifth columnist.

“...the manner in which the United Kingdom introduced it provides a case study for how it should not be done rather than how it should.”

The Blair years

With all things a belief in principle should not be interpreted as blanket support for how the principle has been implemented. The process of devolution in the

U.K. was overseen by the government of Rt Hon. Tony Blair whereby the nature of its reform programme left much to be desired. As so often with Mr Blair’s “sofa” approach to government rather than cabinet government, the process was spasmodic rather than focussed and persistent.

Neither was it coherent. Different devolved bodies with significantly different levels of powers were created with no progress of devolution in England. Institutions more suitable for a country with a written constitution, like the Supreme Court, were established without the written constitution.

European Human Rights law was introduced into British jurisprudence but the introduction of the case law has imported a problem of judicial activism. Other elements like the reform of the House of Lords were started but never taken to their natural conclusion.

The central flaw in Labour’s reforms was its treatment of the “West Lothian Question”. This question was originally posed

during the debates about Scottish devolution in 1977:

For how long will English constituencies and English Honourable Members tolerate...at least 119 Honourable Members from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland exercising an important, and probably often decisive, effect on English politics while they themselves have no say in the same matters in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

This question is based upon the principle of equality of citizenship that should be to the forefront of anyone’s thinking when dealing with constitutional development. Mr Blair never even attempted to answer it. He simply declared it as unimportant. If he genuinely believed this he was wrong. If he didn’t believe it then he was playing fast and loose with the constitution.

Labour left behind not only an economic mess that will take years to resolve, but also a constitutional muddle that needs to be sorted out (and will probably take as long to sort out as the public finances).

Former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher: Her government negotiated the Anglo-Irish Agreement which gave Ireland a voice in Ulster’s government.

The new Conservative and Liberal Democrat government has pledged to examine this issue as part of its Coalition agreement. It is right to do so as an answer is solely needed and the alternative suggestions so far, particularly the Conservative proposals of creating two grades of MPs, would add to muddle rather than resolve it.

Conclusion

Devolution can be viewed as part of the British constitutional inheritance and that of the Commonwealth. It can produce significant benefits for parliamentary democracies in terms of delivering more responsive and successful government. However, the manner in which the United Kingdom introduced it provides a case study for how it should not be done rather than how it should.



THE WAY FORWARD ON MPS' REMUNERATION

Parliament has an opportunity to propose sensible, non-partisan reforms to the system of reimbursing Parliamentarians for their expenses, says the Member who chairs the new House of Commons committee examining expenses.

Mr Adam Afriyie MP

Mr Afriyie is Conservative MP for Windsor. He is also Chairperson of the Committee on Members' Expenses and the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology and is a former Shadow Minister for Science and Innovation.



Mr Adam Afriyie, MP

In 1649, King Charles I was charged with "waging war on Parliament". He was subsequently beheaded. The modern consequences are perhaps less barbaric, but the downfall of Charles I nonetheless illustrates the perils of executive interference in the affairs of Parliament.

In May 2009, *the Daily Telegraph* began publishing the receipts of MPs' expenses claims. It became apparent that some MPs had taken advantage of a lax system for personal financial gain; public confidence in Parliament sank to new depths. Clearly something had to be done. The solution of the previous government – with the support of party leaders – was to establish an

independent body, the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA), to administrate and regulate MPs' expenses and allowances. The Act which established IPSA – the Parliamentary Standards Act 2009 – received Royal Assent on 21 July 2009.

Despite the good intentions of the Prime Minister and party leaders of the day to find a solution, an election was looming and the legislation was hastily drafted and rushed through Parliament. The old expenses system was fatally flawed. But some have argued that the new system shares many of the same flaws as its predecessor. The 2010 UK general election witnessed the arrival in the Commons of 233 new MPs; the biggest parliamentary upheaval since the English civil war. Together with taxpayers and constituents, this new generation of MPs (who had no hand in the old, discredited expenses system) now suffer the unintended consequences of the executive's attempt to shape the affairs of Parliament.

Many believe the expenses scheme devised by IPSA costs taxpayers more than is necessary. It is certainly the case that, in a

period of austerity, IPSA appears to have increased the cost to taxpayers by a few million pounds. IPSA's chairman has claimed that the body made the taxpayer £18m of savings during its first ten months in operation, but it is unclear how he arrived at this figure. He may well be comparing apples with pears. Much of the amount was saved by measures introduced before the introduction of IPSA, whilst some can be attributed to the cost of the large number of MPs who retired at the 2010 election. Much of the saving may be due to wealthier MPs subsidising the taxpayer from their own resources.

A number of MPs have warned that the scheme means that constituents enjoy less of their MPs' time. Another issue of concern is the scheme's impact on less well-off MPs and those with families who cannot afford to buy their way out of the system. It would certainly be a tragedy if we were to return to a Parliament in which only the wealthy can thrive.

These are serious issues and concerns which demand close scrutiny. But what is the solution? To define the way forward, it is perhaps instructive to invoke the



past. As academics Michael Rush and Philip Giddings argue, the history of MPs' remuneration in Britain can be partitioned into three broad time periods:¹

- Pre-1911: MPs were unpaid and had no publicly-funded expenses.
- 1911-1970s: MPs were paid a salary, part of which from 1912 was treated as a tax-deductible allowance for expenses. MPs had access to limited publicly-funded expenses.
- 1970s-present: a clear distinction was drawn between salary and expenses, laying the foundation of the present system. Existing allowances have been extended and new allowances introduced.

Since the 1970s, successive governments and prime ministers, by placing short-term public opinion ahead of the public interest, have presided over the proliferation of a complex system of allowances and expenses; simply in order to avoid politically embarrassing – but necessary – pay rises for MPs. From the introduction of the additional costs allowance in 1972 to its increase by 46.1% in 2001, this trend has increased costs to taxpayers, reduced accountability and undermined the reputation of Parliament.

If Parliament is to improve its public standing, Parliament should take control of its affairs and return to a version of the straightforward – and entirely accountable – Members' Allowance introduced by Lloyd George's government in

1911. The vision set out by Prime Minister Lloyd George is beautiful in its simplicity and entirely pertinent to politics today:

"When we offer £400 a year as payment of Members of Parliament it is not a recognition of the magnitude of the service, it is not a remuneration, it is not a recompense, it is not even a salary. It is just an allowance, to enable men to come here, men who would render incalculable service to the State, and whom it is an incalculable loss to the State not to have here, but who cannot be here because their means do not allow it. It is purely an allowance to enable us to open the door to great and honourable public service to these men, for whom this country will be all the richer, all the greater, and all the stronger for the unknown vicissitudes which it has to face by having there to aid us by their counsel, by their courage, and by their resource."

Over the decades, this vision has been distorted and ignored. The Lawrence committee's report on MPs' remuneration, published in November 1964, succinctly defines the dilemma we now face: either MPs are remunerated to a degree which allows those without private means to efficiently perform their duties; or a system of "differential remuneration" is introduced "which would attempt to meet...the variation in circumstances of individual Members."³

The committee was emphatic in its conclusions: "The latter alternative would...give rise in practice to insuperable difficulties of assessment, even if it were

intrinsically desirable... We are convinced that such a system would give rise to far greater difficulties than those which it sought to meet"⁴ To the detriment of Parliament, consecutive governments have ignored these words of wisdom by foolishly pursuing a system of "differential remuneration".

Thankfully, on 12 May 2011, the House of Commons passed a motion that asks the Committee on Members' Allowances to review the operation of the Parliamentary Standards Act. It will report back to Parliament with recommendations in due course, giving due consideration to:

- a. Value for money for taxpayers;
- b. Accountability;
- c. Public confidence in Parliament;
- d. The ability of Members to fulfil their duties effectively;
- e. Fairness for less well-off Members and those with families; and
- f. That Members are not deterred from submitting legitimate claims.

When we are at risk of creating a Parliament in which only the wealthy can thrive, a thorough and thoughtful review of the legislation is in the public interest. I am confident that the Committee on Members' Allowances will report back to Parliament with reasonable recommendations which place taxpayer value-for-money and accountability at their core whilst ensuring that the original aims of the Act are being fulfilled in its operation through IPSA.

The committee's work will be part of the process of cleaning up our politics and restoring public confidence in our elected representatives.

We need only look overseas to find examples of straightforward and accountable systems of remuneration which reduce the scope for abuse. In Germany, the Bundestag favours a lump-sum

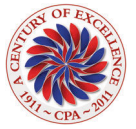
expense allowance on the grounds that "a system based on the submission of receipts would create a huge increase in administrative expenditure".⁵ A 2001 commission to review the pay of Canadian Parliamentarians concluded that a "straightforward system is more likely to be fair and accountable".⁶

There is no reason why Britain cannot lead the way, but it may require the political courage to set aside short-term public opinion in favour of the long-term public interest. That is why the re-formation of the Committee on Members' Allowances is such good news for taxpayers, constituents and British democracy. It presents Parliament with an opportunity to step back in a considered manner and propose sensible, non-partisan recommendations that will cut the cost of MPs, improve accountability and remove unnecessary bureaucracy.

Now is not the time to lose our heads. The committee's proposals might just offer the solution to an issue that has plagued Parliaments and governments for decades.

Endnotes

1. Michael Rush and Philip Giddings, "Worlds Apart: Explaining the MPs' Expenses Scandal", paper presented to the Ninth Workshop of Parliamentary Scholars and Parliamentarians, 24-25 July 2010, Wroxton College, Banbury.
2. Please see the Hansard archives for a complete transcript of Lloyd George's speech: <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/>
3. Report of the Committee on the Remuneration of Ministers and Members of Parliament, November 1964, Cmnd. 2516.
4. Ibid.
5. Deutscher Bundestag website: http://www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/bundestag/members/17/remuneration/expense.html
6. 2001 Canadian Commission to Review Allowances of Parliamentarians: http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/docs/information/publications/supdem-serdem/supdem-serdem_3-eng.pdf.



THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE FOR PARLIAMENTARIANS

Reducing the causes and mitigating the effects of climate change will take a concerted global effort, and Parliamentarians must play a key role in ensuring governments don't lose sight of the targets as other issues compete for attention, says a leading parliamentary supporter of environmentally sustainable policies.

Mr Tim Yeo, MP.

Mr Yeo has been an MP since 1983. He was Minister of State for the Environment in the last Conservative government and Shadow Environment Secretary in opposition. In 2005 he resigned from the Shadow Cabinet to speak more freely on climate change and from 2005 to 2010 he chaired the House of Commons Environmental Audit Select Committee. In June 2010 he was elected Chair of the Energy and Climate Change Select Committee.

During these tough economic times it is difficult to ensure that climate change mitigation remains a priority, but it is vital that it does so. For individuals, economic hardship may knock climate change off the priority list; for national governments, getting the economy running again can mean less money to invest in climate initiatives; and at the international level, countries are less willing to make firm commitments on climate change when they can see others reconsidering their options.

In order to galvanize real action on climate change we need to link up individual efforts, national policies and international agreements for climate change mitigation. I believe that Parliamentarians can be the links in the chain that connect these different arenas and that we can help to strengthen action at every level. First and foremost, the responsibility falls to parliamentarians to hold our governments to account on the commitments they have already made on climate change and to maintain pressure on them to

make ambitious new commitments. Parliamentarians can also be great ambassadors for individual efforts, helping to formulate policies that can enable people to make a difference without breaking the bank. Parliamentarians can also reach up to the international level through organisations like the CPA and use our experiences of national actions to build trust and share best practice.

Parliamentarians must strive to ensure that voters have a strong understanding of climate change, the gravity of its implications and why it is important that we take action now. Climate change can seem a low priority compared with domestic issues, which take precedence in our everyday lives. However, it is important to improve public understanding and awareness of climate change in order to build support for action. If people were made fully aware of the scale of the challenge and the serious international consequences it is sure to bolster support for this important issue. A stronger and more engaged civil



Mr Tim Yeo, MP.

society will also hold the government to account more effectively over the environmental impact of policies—those specifically related to climate change and wider policies which have significant environmental impacts. By bringing the public on board, Parliamentarians can strengthen their own calls for robust action on climate change.

Parliamentarians should communicate to their constituents the advantages of being climate change aware and how they can make small changes in their own lifestyles accordingly. We should emphasise the “win-wins” when



there is an economic advantage that goes hand in hand with an environmental advantage, for example improving energy efficiency around the home and making environmentally friendly transport decisions. Parliamentarians should champion and support green initiatives like those being introduced here in the U.K.: the Green Deal, which will improve the energy efficiency of homes, and feed-in tariffs for micro-generation. We need to create the right system of incentives to make the green option the clear option.

It is also important that we convey to businesses and the commercial sector the opportunities involved with prioritizing environmental sustainability. Initially, investments must be made to ensure sustainable business practice but these can have significant pay offs in the future if we make sure that the right policies are in place. Countries which award high priority to sustainability now will derive economic benefits in the future. We should harness the power of the private sector as they will be an important partner for governments on tackling climate change and can

catalyse low-carbon development. Progression towards a low-carbon economy is not a choice, so countries should take opportunities to adapt now, rather than risk being uncompetitive and lacking efficiency when the new low-carbon economy takes precedence around the world.

Support for taking action on climate change differs considerably between countries at the moment. Parliamentarians have a responsibility to ensure that their governments are taking effective action against climate change in spite of disappointing progress on international agreements and considerable unresolved international tensions. We should adhere to the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, lead by example and put our own house in order before making strong demands of other nations.

In the U.K., we set the lead with the Climate Change Act 2008, the world's first long-term legally binding framework to tackle the dangers of climate change. It has set out an ambitious, legally binding target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80 per cent by 2050 and 34 per cent

by 2020. Now we must follow up on this framework legislation with serious steps to achieve decarbonisation. This means fundamental change, like the Electricity Market Reform (EMR), which is intended to attract £200 billion of investment by 2020 in order to clean up and rebuild the energy sector. All Parliamentarians have a responsibility to make these policies effective by ensuring that the legislation we pass creates a clear and secure framework for green investment. I chair the Energy and Climate Change Committee which has completed an inquiry on EMR and will continue to play an active role in the policy-development process but, when a bill is brought forward to introduce EMR, it will be up to all Members to ensure that the government's proposals are as robust as possible.

At the international level, mistrust between the developed and the developing world has brought the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change process almost to its knees. Countries are unwilling to make costly compromises on their economic development plans when they do not believe that

others will do the same. Strong domestic commitments and action like EMR can demonstrate to other countries that we are taking climate change very seriously indeed. Lack of concessions by other countries in climate change negotiations can make stringent domestic targets difficult to justify to constituents, but we must emphasise the global benefits that will come from prompt effective action, most importantly global stability and security.

It is also important that we keep climate change in mind across government. Many wider policies have implications for climate change, be they related to transport, local government or construction. We must ensure that our policies and legislation are not only climate-benign but seek to capitalise on the opportunities presented by the climate change agenda. It is contradictory to our efforts on climate change if wider government policies have detrimental environmental impacts. We should improve our scrutiny of wider government policy vehicles to ensure that there is cross-government coherence and alignment on this important goal.

On an issue like climate change, Parliamentarians must join up the local, the national and the international, balancing the interests of constituents now with long-term national and international prosperity. My committee will continue to scrutinise the government on the effectiveness and scale of their response to climate change. We will monitor closely both the U.K.'s progress towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the government's plans for meeting the Fourth Carbon Budget. We met with the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change immediately following the Cancun negotiations and will maintain this high level of scrutiny over international proceedings, whilst also scrutinising related domestic policies.

INTERNET GOVERNANCE IS THE BIG OPPORTUNITY FOR THE COMMONWEALTH – AND FOR THE CPA

The internet is not just another emerging issue which can be dealt with through new legislation or expanding the intergovernmental bureaucracy. It requires global partnerships among all interested parties, including MPs, and the Commonwealth is leading the way, says a senior Parliamentarian who has played a prominent role in internet governance.

Rt Hon. Alun Michael MP

Mr Michael is a former cabinet Minister. As Minister of State for Industry he led the U.K. delegation to the World Summit on the Information Society (Tunis 2005) and has participated in the UN's Internet Governance Forum (IGF) for the last four years. He chairs the Parliamentary Information Technology Committee (PITCOM), the Information Society Alliance's e-Crime and Cyber Security Group and the U.K. Internet Governance Forum (U.K. IGF) and has supported the initiative to form a Commonwealth IGF.

"Governance" is an issue that makes people yawn. It's what boring lawyers discuss in dusty libraries isn't it? Well, if we ever thought about governance that way, surely the banking collapse has taught us all a harsh lesson. If it hasn't, we will repeat the same mistakes over and over again.

Politicians generally have a very good understanding of governance. We know what happens when a country has a good constitution but fails to follow it. We know that the banking collapse was a failure of institutional governance.

And we know we need new ways of doing "governance" in an internet age. It cannot be left to the "techies" - nor can we leave it to the "normal business" of international institutions, which won't be able to cope with such a rapid and ever-evolving medium. So we need a different approach.

From being the preserve of academics and technophiles, it's become an unstoppable socio-economic phenomenon which permeates every facet of modern

life, entertainment, education, business and politics.

But it's not plain sailing. Those who say "leave it to its own devices" have misunderstood the importance of their favourite medium and the problems include:

- **Digital Exclusion:** The more we rely on the internet the easier it is to overlook the fact that many people don't have access to. Some lack technical skills, others are fearful, others lack a decent connection.

- **Net Maintenance:** There are worries about the maintenance and evolution of the internet's technical architecture. We need common standards, connectivity protocols and domain name classifications to make sure the internet operates effectively universally across the globe.

- **Concerns about content:** Management of online content happens – but who controls it? Should it be free-flowing and unrestricted? Or should we protect the vulnerable?

And that gets us to the real issues. Preventing online child abuse has been a success story in



Rt Hon. Alun Michael, MP.

the U.K. precisely because we did not pass new laws. Industry leaders responded to child protection NGOs and law enforcement bodies with the blessing of Ministers and Parliamentarians. That partnership approach has done more than legislation could ever have achieved – it's "good governance" that has made the Internet Watch Foundation a success story.

Rightly, the Commonwealth IGF (Internet Governance Forum) has put its first emphasis on the needs of children. Joe Tabone of Malta has provided inspiring leadership

and many others – especially our colleagues in Kenya who will host the Internet Governance Forum for the UN in September – have shown that we are ahead of the game in understanding governance in the internet age.

Let's be clear. Online criminals exploit the speed and reach of the internet with incredible vigour so we need a coordinated international response to crooks and terrorists. International cyber-attacks make it imperative to have more coordinated activity and global intelligence-sharing at a global level. Lower down the scale we need to deal with the rising tide of online scams, phishing attacks and low-level fraud. It's just that Laws rarely prevent what they forbid.

That's always been true but it's crucial to accept that it's true in the online world too.

Governments, businesses, citizens and customers are all increasingly reliant on online channels, so we cannot allow anyone to be left out. But the Internet's success is built on being a free-flowing medium – so we need intelligent, adaptable, flexible governance rather than a bureaucratic agency taking the lead.

Recently, developments at national and international levels are evolving co-operative mechanisms and joint-working activity.

Where it all started

As Industry Minister in 2005, I led the U.K. delegation to the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis. I did not know what I was letting myself in for. Journalists predicted that the talks would collapse as the Chinese and others demanded a new international agency to "run the internet" and the U.S.A. said "don't change anything"!

Two great public servants - Nick Thorne (then U.K. Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva) and David Hendon (DTI) promoted the idea of "dynamic coalitions" and "enhanced co-

operation" as better than a UN treaty or a new agency.

As a result the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) became an annual event for building consensus, creating a unique opportunity for us to break free of traditional governance and administration. Today, the IGF process is now no longer dependant on just one annual event. The IGF model has created exciting and innovative opportunities world-wide for co-operation between stakeholders.

The IGF Model

- Industry has to lead (because those who are at the cutting edge should help us to understand new developments - and minimise the harm of "tinkering".)
- Government and Parliament both have to be at the table (with law enforcement and public bodies included) and the role of Parliamentarians across party is absolutely crucial to this democratic model
- "Civil Society" (NGOs, charities, community groups) need to be included.

The flowering of IGF models in different regions of the world – with Commonwealth countries taking the lead in many of them – is enormously exciting. Regional IGFs have been established in Asia, East Africa, West Africa and Europe. National IGFs in Australia, France, Germany and the United States have a growing influence. But the emergence of the Commonwealth IGF is the most ambitious example. It gives the Commonwealth the unique opportunity for leadership that I mentioned earlier.

Progress at last

This has taken us from a situation where the internet looked too big to regulate – to a situation where individuals consider how to eat the elephant in small slices, with confidence that it will make a real difference. If we can avoid a

legalistic approach, we will have achieved more than well-intentioned international diplomacy has previously achieved over centuries.

We have certainly seen benefits in the U.K., through open consultation with Industry, Civil Society and Parliamentarians as well as government. The approach survived a change of government. We've set priorities together – with Security still at the top of the agenda and access and confidence close behind.

Vilnius 2010

Last year's fifth IGF in Vilnius had the largest attendance yet - plus remote participation at 32 remote hubs around the world. And the Commonwealth representatives there met to work on the model for a Commonwealth IGF. The Commonwealth includes such a diversity of nations that can see what is common to developed and developing nations and across every continent. The Commonwealth is uniquely qualified to bridge a deep and dangerous chasm and to show the world how to do it together.

There is tremendous positive enthusiasm for the unfolding benefits of the Internet – tempered by concern about the widening digital divide between the developed and developing world and issues of security and access.

In Nairobi the Commonwealth IGF will hold its third open forum. At Vilnius the main Commonwealth IGF workstream was a Child Protection Toolkit. This year it will focus on updating this Toolkit, and on developing a Commonwealth model law based upon the Budapest Convention (recently ratified by the U.K.) and related capacity-building within Commonwealth member states.

The ongoing challenge

The challenges that confront us are those presented in the old Indian parable of the 'Blind Men and the Elephant'. Each man

touches a different part of the animal and comes to a separate conclusion about its nature, depending which bit he is feeling. Similarly, the Internet is a huge space where everyone grasps one corner. Our knowledge is limited and our vision is only partial. So we need to do it together – through "Co-operative Governance" if we are to maximise the worldwide benefits of the internet whilst containing and minimising its potential for harm.

The next IGF meeting in Nairobi in September 2011 will set the scene for the future. Its multi-stakeholder dialogue and discussion will be invaluable. We need more Parliamentarians to join us and understand – as lay people – how to make a friend of this unique medium whose potential is still unfolding.

Today, there are plenty of "feet on the ground" as civil society representatives, businesses and Parliamentarians work together to create national and regional co-operative frameworks to promote dialogue on internet governance issues. International tectonic plates of activity are quietly increasing in momentum, but that progress is not always understood. It's an inevitable fact that the media will enthusiastically report bad news (earthquakes and tsunamis) whereas quiet, constructive, co-operative work rarely makes headlines.

So, as Parliamentarians, we need to make sure that our governments wake up to what is already happening, before a unique opportunity to harness and build on these vibrant bottom-up initiatives is thrown away.

You cannot rush organic growth – any more than you can make a child grow up overnight – and it takes time to grow institutions and develop a style of governance. But the Internet is in a big hurry, which makes the whole issue of Internet Governance such a big challenge. And the Commonwealth must take the lead.



BRITISH OVERSEAS TERRITORIES, CROWN DEPENDENCIES AND THE COMMONWEALTH

Britain's internally self-governing territories must play a greater role in the Commonwealth, as they do in the CPA, says one of their leading Westminster advocates.

Mr Andrew Rosindell MP.

Mr Rosindell has been the Member of Parliament for Romford since 2001; he was appointed as an Opposition Whip in 2005 and a Shadow Home Affairs Minister in 2007. He is currently Chairman of the Overseas Territories All-Party Parliamentary Group and sits on the Foreign Affairs Select Committee.

With so much media focus recently on the Middle East, China and North Africa, it all too easy to forget that not everything beyond our shores is necessarily "foreign"; Britain does by no means stop at the White Cliffs of Dover, or at Lands End.

The United Kingdom has 16 Overseas Territories (counting Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha, in addition to St. Helena) many of which have been under The Crown for hundreds of years; our oldest, Bermuda, has been with us since 1609 celebrating its 400th anniversary only two years ago. Britain also has five Crown Dependencies.

In the U.K. Parliament, I am Chairman of the Overseas Territories All Party Parliamentary Group and take an active interest in their affairs as well those of the Crown Dependencies, as Chairman of the Isle of Man and

Vice-Chairman of the Channel Islands groups.

Our Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies are broad, diverse and wonderfully unique; you can find them virtually anywhere, from the Antarctic to the Caribbean, Pacific to Atlantic; we have a little piece of Britain in almost every corner of the globe! All of our Crown Dependencies lay within the British Isles, the four Channel Islands of Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney and Sark – not forgetting the Isle of Man – where you can find the oldest continuous Parliament in the world.

I always find it extraordinary that no matter how far I may travel to visit an Overseas Territory they always feel like home; whether it is the familiar shape of a post box or The Queen's Head on a coin, the very fabric of these territories follow a distinctly British sentiment.

This sentiment is built in part



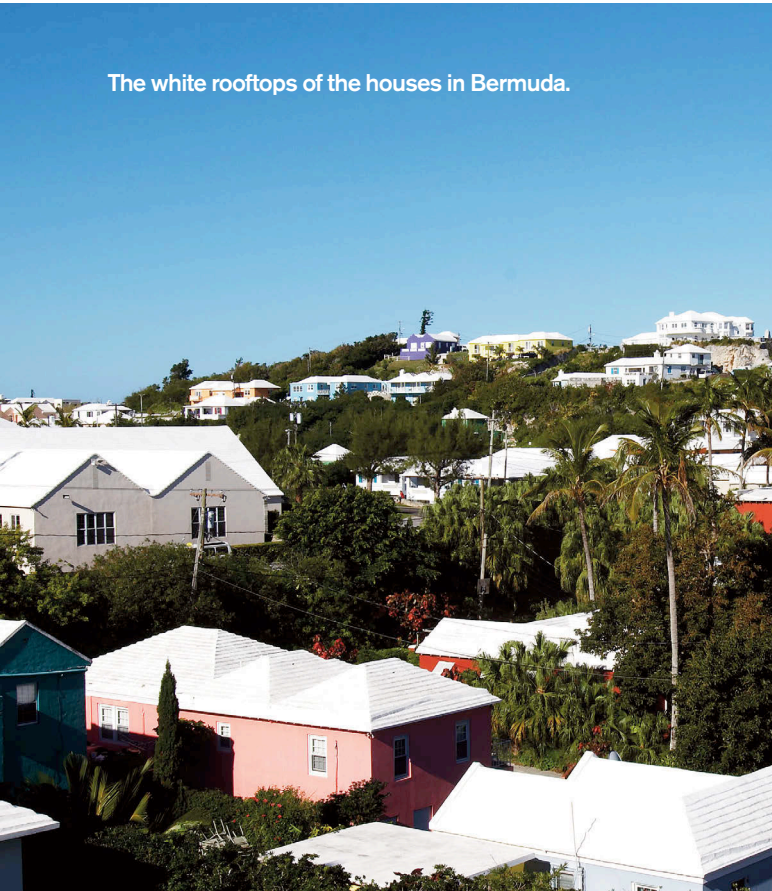
Mr Andrew Rosindell, MP

through the colonial legacy, but more so the common belief in British values; the governance, judicial system and institutions in British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies have – despite in some cases extreme isolation – stood the test of time.

Our Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies also furnish us with some of the most exceptional ecological and



The white rooftops of the houses in Bermuda.



scientifically valuable habitats in the world. Recently I was fortunate enough to attend a conference on the British Antarctic Survey, which outlined the cutting edge environmental research being conducted in the British Antarctic Territory.

Switching to the Pacific Ocean, Henderson Island – part of the Pitcairn Territory – is virtually unaltered by man and is home to four bird species and nine plants found nowhere else on the planet. In a similar fashion the British Indian Ocean Territory (Chagos) is rich in wildlife with 220 coral types and over 1,000 species of fish unique to the area.

I do, however, think that as Parliamentarians we need to do far more to strengthen the link between the United Kingdom and British territories and dependencies overseas. I find it disheartening that so many British people are still unaware that a ‘Britain’ exists beyond our shores. Frustratingly I find that the only

time our territories and dependencies are mentioned these days is in the context of either being a so-called “tax haven” or “taxpayer burden”; these negative connotations do nothing to recognize the reality of the historic relationship Britain has with them all.

I firmly believe that our schools should teach people from a young age about the Commonwealth, Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, about how we are all part of a large family who share the same history and traditions. There is so much value in having this global community and I certainly think there should be a sharper focus on it.

Despite my passion for Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies and my unashamedly pro-British view when it comes to talk of independence, I overarch everything with a fervent belief in the self-determination of British citizens. This belief does not just

extend to independence, but in self-governance and the right to run affairs in the most autonomous way possible.

I fully support the view that the role of the U.K. government in the affairs of Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies should be minimal; the very nature of our territories is geared towards self sustainability and I see no reason why this should not be the case.

Obviously there are instances when it is right and proper for the United Kingdom to step in; in times of natural disaster such as the volcanic eruptions in Tristan da Cunha (1961) and Montserrat (1997), or in instances of defence such as the Falklands War (1982). The United Kingdom should afford its Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies every support.

With the sentiment of minimal U.K Government interaction in mind, there are of course questions of identity, citizenship and constitutional status which in some cases still need to be addressed. I have talked about this in the House of Commons on many occasions and unfortunately there are still issues that remain unresolved. The current situation in the Turks & Caicos Islands is an example of this, where the islands are under direct rule by Her Majesty’s Government.

British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies often fall into a grey area as far as their constitutional status in the U.K. is concerned. For instance there is no parliamentary representation for the 240,000 or so British Overseas Territory citizens or the Crown Dependencies. There are also questions over display of their flags at Trooping the Colour and wreath laying on Remembrance Day; neither ceremony allows the Overseas Territories or Crown Dependencies to participate or play any part whatsoever.

Their status within the Commonwealth is also ambiguous. While the CPA include them as

regional members, the Commonwealth overall does not. They have no official status at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings and have no platform or voice whatsoever. This cannot be right and I fervently believe that change is needed to give the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies the recognition they deserve.

This also applies to the Realm States of New Zealand and the External Territories of Australia.

When I visit Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, I speak to elected representatives, community leaders or simply people on the street and I always detect such a strong sense of belonging.

It is perhaps difficult from a “mainland” perspective to recognize the strength of feeling that people in Territories feel towards Britain and I personally believe that successive governments, both Conservative and Labour, have simply not done enough to foster this connection.

I am reassured however to see that the current government has taken a much more proactive approach in engaging with territories; we have a Minister, Henry Bellingham MP, who has a real passion for the British Overseas Territories and recognises their importance and relevance in our current age. Crown Dependencies are looked after by the Ministry of Justice.

I have every faith that in the current Parliament, we will see Britain’s relationship with her Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies prosper, grow and galvanise and go from strength to strength in the years ahead.

All Parliamentarians from across the Commonwealth will, I hope, join me in saluting all the British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies for the pride they demonstrate in their homeland, combined with steadfast loyalty to Britain and The Crown.

INCREASING THE NUMBER OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT

Women can help to achieve changes in society; but the first change they have to make is to convince other women that they can and must stand successfully for election to improve society through Parliament, says a woman who worked for a decade to become an MP.

Ms Mary McLeod, MP.

Ms McLeod was elected to Parliament in May 2010 and is the Conservative Member for Brentford and Isleworth. She is the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of State for Policing, a Member of the Home Affairs Select Committee and the Chair of the Women in Parliament Group.



Ms Mary McLeod, MP.

Despite the increased numbers of women MPs elected at last year's general election, women continue to be underrepresented in Parliament and it is something that we continue to focus on.

After the 2010 election, just over one in five Members of Parliament are women, compared with just over one half of the adult population. Out of the 27 EU Member States, the U.K. currently ranks 11th in terms of women's

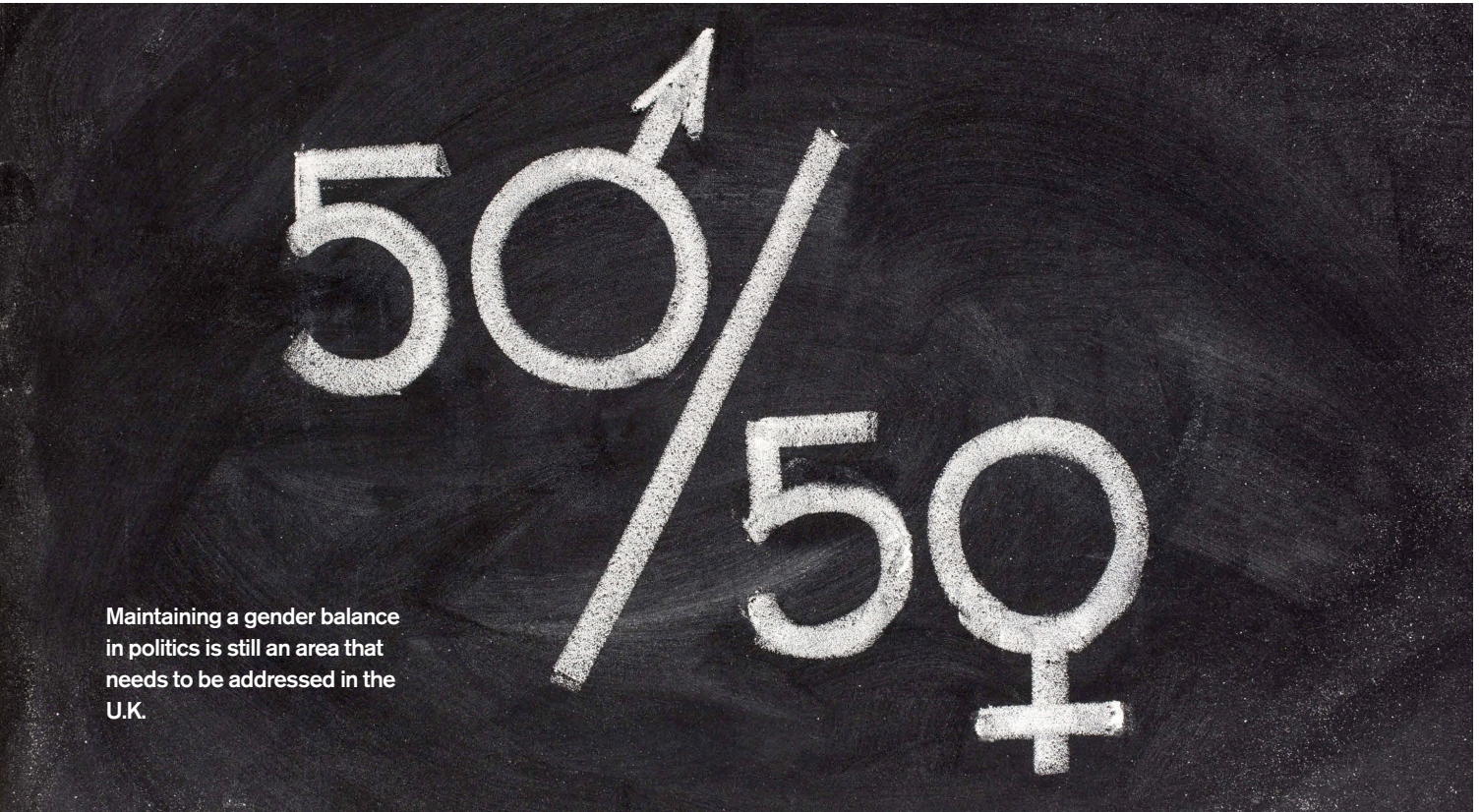
representation in national Parliaments. In global terms, the U.K. Parliament is currently 50th out of 139 countries, with Rwanda, Sweden and South Africa leading the way in terms of women's representation in Parliament.

Does it matter that we don't have gender balance in politics? Will it really improve politics to increase the number of women involved in running the country? I would point to the extensive research in the business-world demonstrating that companies with a higher proportion of women in their senior management teams are more successful: they demonstrate stronger growth, higher return on sales and equity, exhibit enhanced decision-making skills and are more careful when managing risk.

Contrary to what some may suggest, I am a firm believer that the world of politics is not alien to the world of business and if something has been shown categorically to improve performance in the business world, we need to sit up and take note.

In 2008, the Speaker's Conference was charged to "consider, and make recommendations for rectifying, the disparity between the representation of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in the House of Commons and their representation in the U.K. population at large". The resulting report and recommendations were published by all-party agreement and this serves as a useful reference point for progress on this matter.

My own experience, as a recent addition to the ranks of women MPs, was one of a reasonably tough battle to get selected for a seat. I spent more than 10 years getting involved in politics at different levels, standing first in the challenging seat of Ross, Skye and Inverness West which provided valuable experience of campaigning. Did I experience discrimination along the way? Yes, but looking back, I feel this strengthened my resolve and made me more determined to get selected. I then worked as hard as I



Maintaining a gender balance in politics is still an area that needs to be addressed in the U.K.

could get elected and to represent the people of Brentford & Isleworth who have put their faith in me.

I strongly believe in a meritocracy and my task now as an MP is to get rid of any discrimination that exists and encourage great women to come forward and help them gain the right experience to be outstanding Parliamentarians.

I am pleased that I was selected from a candidates' list that contained both men and women. I am not a supporter of all-women shortlists as I don't believe it is the best way to serve the long-term interests of women in Parliament.

So, how do we increase the numbers of women in Parliament? We need to look at all stages in the process, from the earliest indications of interest, the selection process, campaigning, through to the reality of being an MP. We then need to tackle any barriers that exist along the way along the way.

Perhaps the biggest challenge lies at the start of this process, in encouraging women to express an

interest in politics in the first place. For too many women, the world of politics is seen as adversarial, male-dominated and intrusive and we will fail to change things significantly until we alter this perception.

Women, in my experience, are often motivated by wanting to make the world a better place, in their workplace and for their families.

The sad thing is that this desire isn't often translated into a passion for politics. It is in politics that we address the issues that affect everyone in the country: from how best to educate and support our young people to make the best of their abilities, making decisions to lead our country out of deficit and into prosperity, through to addressing climate change challenges that threaten our planet for future generations.

Where better to make a difference in the world than in politics? It is our challenge to communicate this message to inspire the female politicians of tomorrow.

I believe that a large share of the responsibility for achieving change lies with the existing group of women MPs. It is down to us to ensure we do all we can to effectively represent women's issues within Parliament and to demonstrate the benefits of having more women in Parliament. If we come across rules and behaviour that would discourage women from getting involved in politics, it is up to us to challenge these and make improvements.

To this end, I have set up an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Women in Parliament, with the goal to tackle some of the issues preventing women from getting into Parliament and to look at ways to increase the focus on women's issues.

We are the role models for the future generation of women MPs. Of course, that's not to say that there are no men in the House that understand the value of having more women in politics – in fact many have already joined the APPG for Women in Parliament and we need them to stand up and

talk about the importance of meritocracy and equal opportunities for everyone.

Collectively, all existing MPs should take responsibility for headhunting, encouraging, mentoring and supporting the next generation of female politicians.

I am keen to understand the issues that women MPs are facing right now in Parliament and if there are any "quick wins" we could implement to make life easier. I am in the process of sending out a survey to all women MPs, asking about their experiences during the selection process and while in Parliament and I hope to present this at the next APPG meeting to direct our efforts going forward.

In summary, we need great women in Parliament. Politicians like myself who have the honour of being in the House of Commons, can play a key role in supporting others for the future. With a more representative group of MPs, the House of Commons will become stronger, better and more effective – delivering real change across the country.



THE IMPACT OF THE NEW INTAKE AT WESTMINSTER

Westminster is a steep learning curve for every newly elected MP. A new arrival from the 2010 general election describes how he has been finding his way around without losing any of the passion and the new ideas that helped to get him there.

Mr Gavin Williamson MP.

Mr Williamson was elected to represent South Staffordshire in May 2010. Having been elected onto the Executive of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, he joined the Council for Education in the Commonwealth as one of their Parliamentary Chairs. He is Chairman of the All-Party Group for Motor Neurone Disease and sits on the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee.

It is an odd scenario being elected. That first moment when the returning officer announces the election results on stage revealing that you have been elected to Parliament and that you are going to Westminster to represent your constituents is very surreal. Straight after that he hands you a large envelope. You sit there thinking to yourself I hope that this contains all the answers to the questions I have concerning how to be a Member of Parliament? What do you do as an actual MP? What are you even meant to do? Away from the congratulations you quickly open it and discover that it doesn't say an awful lot and it isn't a great deal of help. It outlines some of the features and protocols of the House of Commons but there is nothing to help you with the task ahead.

The next morning you wake up groggy, extremely tired from the lack of sleep and celebration drinks. The exhaustion was exacerbated when my daughters ran in at six thirty in the morning just to see if I had won or not. The

first thing waiting for you as a recently elected MP is a large pile of correspondence which you start to get on with. It is quite a shock seeing MP after your name on the paper. A call from the whips suggesting that I should go to Parliament on the Monday followed the letters. It is at this point that you start to realise that there is another aspect to the job that is opening up in front of you.

I remember jumping on the train at Stafford Station and travelling down not entirely sure what I would do when I got to London. We had been given instructions to come down to the Portcullis House entrance and to bring a passport, a utility bill and a piece of election literature to prove that you are who you say you are. Going through security you are given a sticker and I think that this is to identify the new boys and girls so that people will treat them with a little bit more kindness and sympathy. There is a whip round all the desks for a quick induction and then you are met with the reality of having to get on with the different parts of being in



Mr Gavin Williamson, MP.

Parliament. You are issued a hot desk. I remember walking into Committee Room 16 seeing the grandeur of it and then rushing to grab a desk and try and make it your home until you are issued an office.

Once you get over the initial shock of arriving in Westminster and dealing with the post you then start considering the politics. You are watching the news and there is the talk of the coalition. What is going on? Who are the liberals going to form a coalition with? Who will be the Prime Minister? Which parties will form a government? I



found it amusing sitting in Westminster to find that the only source of information that we had to keep us informed of the progress of negotiations was Sky News and the BBC. Walking around the constituency everyone seems to think that you know exactly what is going on in the heart of Westminster. They seemed a little disappointed when I revealed that David Cameron wasn't calling all the time to ask advice about how best to proceed.

I remember having some friends over during my first few days in Westminster, one was from America and they asked where I was working. I took them to Committee Room 16 where I was based and showed them the incredibly grand room overlooking the Thames. The visitor said: "What an amazing office. I see from the desks that all of your staff sit in here as well!" I explained that actually I sat in the office with another 25 MPs alongside their staff. It slightly broke the illusion of the grandness of British politics.

One of the first things that you

learn in the Palace of Westminster is that the more you get lost in Parliament the faster you learn the short cuts. I would heartily recommend getting lost in Westminster. You discover routes that you never knew existed and you start to learn great routes for avoiding the whips if they are ever truly required. Also being a new Member of Parliament our offices are situated at the furthest point on the estate from the Chamber and so when you are running to vote it helps to know the short cuts.

Being elected was a humbling experience. It is overwhelming that so many people have put their faith in you but in addition to this when you arrive at Parliament there is the crashing reality of how insignificant you are in the grand scheme of things. I often walk through Westminster Hall thinking about the 900 years of history in this place and the people who have walked here before and it makes you appreciate that you are simply a speck that is here today and will probably be quickly forgotten.

This election returned an

unusually high number of specks to Parliament and people are often interested to see the impact that such a massive new intake of MPs has had on Parliament. There are many questions on this subject including whether it has been significant enough to change the way that Parliament works. Some MPs will have been elected to Parliament believing that it as their right or their destiny to represent people in this place. Many have bought with them an opinion of themselves where they believe that they could make a real impact on the place. They probably now appreciate that those views were unrealistic and naive.

Parliament in 2011 was at a crucial stage. The expenses scandal combined with a change in Government led to one of the largest new intakes of all time and this has had a real impact on life inside the Palace – not that I can claim to know what it was like before! The new intake seems to have brought new life into Westminster. Amongst the new Members there is a real passion for

Parliament, a real enthusiasm for taking part in it, a real joy of using the stage that it provides in order to highlight the issues and concerns of their constituents and national issues. You only have to look at Departmental Question Times, invariably 60 to 70 per cent of the questions are being asked by the new MPs and if you look at the applications for debates there is a real enthusiasm for taking part.

I remember just after we were elected there was another round of elections for places on committees and all the work to be elected was being refocused to win them a seat on the various committees that had caught their fancy. It was fascinating to see the results and the vast majority of seats on the select committees being taken by members of the new intake. I do firmly believe that so many new Members of Parliament have bought change to Westminster and the way that Parliament feels if not necessarily the way that Parliament functions.

There is that real passion, that enthusiasm, that excitement that often you can only get when you are new to something. I would like to think that that passion, that excitement, that enthusiasm for the place, what you can do there and what it stands for can only strengthen what Parliament is. You are seeing certain individuals start to make their mark in parliament. People that when they stand up other MPs will fall silent for and listen with real intent. There are some real characters emerging that people warm to instantaneously and sometimes have the reverse effect to that. Will the new intake bring lasting change? I think that it is far too early to say. I think that one thing is certain: the new intake will bring plenty of new characters, plenty of new ideas and plenty of fresh enthusiasm that keeps any institution as grand and as old as Parliament alive and refreshed and always making it stronger.

REFLECTING ON ZIMBABWE

A delegation of British Parliamentarians visited Zimbabwe recently to assess how this former Commonwealth member country is striving to bring about economic and political reform.

Ms Kate Hoey, MP.

Ms Hoey has been the Labour Member of Parliament for Vauxhall, South London, since a by-election in 1989. In 1998 she was appointed as a Minister in the Home Office before becoming the U.K.'s first female Sports Minister in 1999 – a position she held until the 2001 general election.

Since then she has been an active Backbencher and is very interested in foreign affairs – visiting Sarajevo at the height of the siege, monitoring the first democratic elections in Angola and visiting Zimbabwe regularly.



Ms Kate Hoey, MP.

I was accompanied on a visit to Zimbabwe recently by Lord Joffe and Oliver Colville, MP, a newly elected Conservative MP with long experience of fighting elections. Lord Joffe spent his early life in South Africa and was defence lawyer for Nelson Mandela when he faced the death penalty, charged with treason in the Rivonia Trial of 1963/64. He is one of the

heroes of the South African struggle and last year was invested as a Companion of O R Tambo, one of South Africa's highest honours, by President Zuma (whom he also defended back in the 1960s).

We had planned to be in Harare when Parliament was sitting but, with no Speaker it had adjourned. Despite this we met MPs representing constituencies in nearly every one of Zimbabwe's 10 provinces. We were honoured that so many MPs travelled especially to see us and helped to make our visit so useful.

Takalani Prince Matibe MP for Chegutu West and his agent Admire Mapasure give us a fascinating tour of his constituency. He took us to see the new Borden Primary School for which he raised funds together with local people.

We also saw the thriving new

market he has helped build in Chegutu town where farmers from the district can sell their produce. The economy in Chegutu was very badly hit when a large cotton ginners, the major employer in the town closed with the loss of thousands of jobs.

Driving through the district I saw vast swathes of commercial farming land still lying uncultivated and returning to bush. Only a few small pockets of productive agriculture remain.

We saw life in urban Zimbabwe when Paul Madzore showed us round his Glenview constituency on the southeastern outskirts of Harare, and were warmly welcomed by the staff and pupils of Glenview No. 1 High School. Their O&A Level exam results were exceptionally good and Mr Colville suggested we might send our Education Minister to visit to



see what lessons we in the U.K. needed to learn from the headmaster there. Unfortunately the text books paid for by taxpayers in the U.K. and donated to Zimbabwe schools via the education ministry in Harare had not yet arrived at either of the two schools we visited. The good

manners and smart uniforms of the pupils was a delight to see. What a shame that for so many their hard work and dedication will not be rewarded by jobs when they finish their education.

The economic progress that has been made since Tandai Biti became Minister of Finance is

encouraging and it was such a change from my previous visits to see well stocked shops. But until there is rule of law, an end to violence and intimidation and free and fair elections under a new constitution, investment will be scarce.

Members of Parliament and the government bear a huge responsibility and it is shocking that so many are being arrested on trivial pre-texts. The lives of millions of Zimbabweans suffer when Ministers and MPs are diverted from the vital work of national recovery and rebuilding the infrastructure of the country.

I am really pleased to see again the encouraging unity of purpose that binds together the courageous men and women struggling to bring reform and progress to Zimbabwe – whether

Above: The delegation at Borden Primary School in Chegutu West constituency with the local MP Takalani Prince Matibe;
Right: The delegation with the Zimbabwean Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai.

they are active in politics or in civil society. It was a pleasure to be in Zimbabwe with colleagues from the U.K. Parliament and to see how we can work in partnership with elected representatives in Zimbabwe to make life better for the young people we met.

As current events round the world remind us of the strength of people-power it was good to see once again the brave determination of so many brave Zimbabweans.



THE UNITED KINGDOM AND PAKISTAN – THE VALUE OF INTERPARLIAMENTARY EXCHANGES

A United Kingdom Parliamentarian advocates adding a parliamentary dimension to the links that many in his English constituency have with their former Pakistani home so Members in both countries can strengthen democracy and the Commonwealth connection.

Mr Simon Danczuk, MP

Mr Danczuk has been involved in the Labour movement for many years having joined the Labour Party through the GMB trade union in the late 1980s. He is a former councillor, having been elected at age 27 and served eight years before standing down to concentrate on business. He was elected to Parliament on 6 May 2010 and is a Member of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee and Vice-Chair of the Pakistan All-Party Parliamentary Group.

In Britain we've become accustomed to our media having an almost unhealthy obsession with the Anglo-American "special relationship". So important is the transatlantic alliance seen by commentators that there is a tendency to sometimes overlook our deep links with other countries, notably close and historic allies like Pakistan.

It is something of a cliché to say that the relationships that matter come to the fore in times of need, and while Pakistan is facing a period of difficult and complex challenges Britain must hold out a hand of friendship and renew our support.

Not just because of our shared and interwoven histories, and far-reaching ties between families and businesses in British and Pakistani communities, but because a prosperous and secure British future is dependent on Pakistan also having a strong future.

In every community in Britain our rich shared history is manifest. Almost one million British citizens are of Pakistani heritage and

10,000 Pakistani students are currently studying in universities here. Bilateral trade is worth more than £1 billion annually and over 100 British companies including the likes of GlaxoSmithKline, Toni & Guy and Barclays are operating in Pakistan.

In my constituency of Rochdale, which is twinned with Sahiwal in northeast Pakistan, the Pakistani community forms a lively component of this global network. People, news and opinions fly regularly between our two countries and both are the richer for it.

That is why I am proud to see Britain's international development budget being protected from the spending cuts and around £665million being committed to Pakistan over the next three years. Helping get more children into school, improving literacy and equipping people with the skills they need is vital to supporting Pakistan's New Growth Strategy and achieving a strong post flood economic recovery.

Relations between our respective Parliaments can play an



Mr Simon Danczuk, MP.

important part in this development by building on our shared values and fostering a deeper understanding of the challenges facing our governments. With five newly-elected members of our parliament of Pakistani origin, it is not just senior figures like Rt Hon. William Hague, MP, Baroness Warsi and Hon. David Miliband, MP, that have made key visits to Pakistan in recent months. Many others are showing an equally strong interest in strengthening the relationship across Parliaments.



Earlier this year I was one of a 10-strong cross party delegation from the U.K. Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association that visited Pakistan to sign a landmark friendship agreement between British and Pakistani Parliamentarians. Establishing a framework for MP to MP exchange seminars and working groups in each other's Parliament for short periods every four to six months, the agreement mapped out a number of issues on

which Parliamentarians pledged to share experiences and best practice. These included committee work, the role of the Speaker, the role of the Whips, the role of an MP in Parliament and in their constituency and relationships with civil society organizations.

Initial exchanges have been very productive and, for me personally, I am particularly interested in learning more on the latter issue of how Pakistani

Parliamentarians engage with civil society organizations. Many here have been gripped by the passage of the 18th Amendment, which represents a significant progressive milestone.

In the coming months I expect this agreement to prepare the ground for stronger, clearer and warmer links between our Parliamentarians. There is much debate at the moment around the globe about Pakistan's uncertain future and the importance of

Commonwealth parliamentary democracy from the modern Chamber of National Assembly of Pakistan (left) to the historic turrets of Westminster.

establishing safety for its citizens and a secure region beyond. Achieving this will require global support and co-operation. Making sure as many Parliamentarians as possible have a strong stake in this future is a critical starting point to making this happen.

THE WORKINGS OF THE BACKBENCH BUSINESS COMMITTEE

An experimental and innovative new committee has increased the effectiveness of individual backbench Members to such an extent that it has generated extensive interest among FrontBenchers and Backbenchers alike, says a senior Clerk.

Mr Andrew Kennon.

Mr Andrew Kennon has been the Principal Clerk of the Table Office since 2009. Prior to this he served as: Clerk of the Journals (2008-09); Secretary of the House of Commons Commission (2006-08); Principal Clerk of Select Committees (2004 -06), and Head of the Scrutiny Unit (2002-04). From 1997-99 he was seconded to the Cabinet Office to advise Ministers and officials on the implementation of the new government's programme for constitutional reform and modernization of Parliament.



Mr Andrew Kennon.

One significant change in the new Parliament elected in May 2010 has been the 35 days (or more) allocated for business to be chosen by the Backbench Business Committee.

The origins of the Backbench Business Committee lie in the report of the Wright Committee. Set up to reform the House after the expenses scandal in 2009, the committee recommended that "a Backbench Business Committee be created... comprised of

between seven and nine Members elected by secret ballot of the House as a whole, with...party proportionality [reflecting] the House". For some this was a stepping stone towards a House Business Committee, similar to that in the Scottish Parliament.

Perhaps the committee's most useful recommendation was that "No Standing Order should constrain the inventiveness of colleagues in the next Parliament".

Elections

In accordance with the new practice in the House of Commons, the chair of the committee was directly elected by the House. There was some surprise that Ms Natascha Engel, a Labour (opposition) Backbencher first elected in 2005 defeated the widely-respected former Deputy Speaker, Sir Alan Haselhurst, a Conservative (government) MP of many years standing by 202 votes to 173.

The committee comprises eight Members – conveniently small for making decisions but too small to ensure the representation of minor parties. In the current House, the party breakdown reflecting the composition of the House as a whole gives the Conservatives four, Labour three and the Liberal Democrats one. The committee operates almost exclusively by consensus. It has only had one division so far, and no decisions have been taken on party lines. But the absence of minor parties has been an area of political delicacy, with the Chair of the committee going to great lengths to assure the two dozen or so Members representing six small parties or independents that their representations will carry equal weight with other Members.

Unlike other select committees, the full membership of the Backbench Business Committee is also directly elected by the House. This is complicated by the



party and gender requirements (at least two men and at least two women). Of the three parties represented on the committee, the places for two of the parties were

filled without contested elections – and these also satisfied the gender requirement. Nonetheless the whole House was able to vote in the election between three Labour

MPs for two places. A subsequent by-election for both Labour places (following promotions to shadow positions) was uncontested. In the first election all those elected were

Saint Stephens Porch over the main entrance to the Palace of Westminster.



relative newcomers, having themselves only been first elected to the House in 2005 – with one from the new intake of 2010.

Choosing business

The committee's main task is to select subjects for debate on the days provided for backbench business each year. These days are not set out in advance for the whole session, unlike the days set aside for private Members' Bills. Like the 20 opposition days, they are set aside, one at a time a few weeks in advance, from the government's business plan.

The Backbench Business Committee therefore usually gets two or three weeks' notice of a particular day in the Chamber. Part of the allocation is made up of at least 16 half-days not on the floor of the House but in the parallel sitting in Westminster Hall. This means that now all Thursdays in Westminster Hall are either for Backbench Business or for debates on select committee reports.

The committee meets once a week – at lunchtime on a Tuesday

– in public and on the record to hear representations from Members for time to be allocated for debate on a specific subject. This meeting has variously been described as the "Dragon's den" and "Natascha's salon". At any one meeting the committee will probably have no more than one day in the Chamber to allocate and possibly a half day or two in Westminster hall. So demand usually exceeds supply, which helps the committee reach decisions. Members tend to ask those applying for debates how many other Members would take part in debate and what other opportunities have been taken to debate the issue.

The committee has been keen to see substantive motions rather than general debates on the floor of the House – with general debates held in Westminster Hall. It is a long time since private Members' motions have been debated in the House.

There were days for such motions – chosen by ballot – until the Jopling reforms of sitting hours in the mid-1990s re-allocated the

time for general debates on the adjournment. Although Members are used to tabling early day motions which are very unlikely to be debated, the practice of drawing up a motion which may be subject to amendment and vote had not always been simple.

While it is often said that Early Day Motions are never debated, some of the motions chosen for debate on Backbench Business Days did in fact originate as EDMs – for instance the debate on 10 March 2011 on UN Women. The Committee has taken note of the Early Day Motions which have received most support in the form of added names but there have been few cases of MPs trying to bring their EDM to the committee for debate on the Floor of the House. There has been one example of an EDM being listed on the Order Paper as relevant to a debate in Westminster hall.

One delicate matter with which the committee has had to contend is support among other Members to schedule business which may lead to a vote on a Thursday afternoon. Members often expect

to be on their way back to their constituencies by then and successive governments have chosen in the past to put on non-contentious business that day. That is why the day of the week most often allocated to the Backbench Business Committee is Thursday. One school of thought holds that Backbenchers ought to be at Westminster on Thursday afternoon anyway.

Another school recognizes the competing constituency commitments. Sometimes the committee has scheduled a debate on a substantive motion with a possible vote at about 4.00 p.m. followed by a general debate ending without a vote at 6.00 p.m. Either way, the number of Members willing to stay and debate on Thursdays – both in the House and concurrently in Westminster Hall – has been impressively high.

The figure of 35 days reserved for backbench business in the session starting in May 2010 was drawn from the recommendation of the Wright Committee. That committee looked at the number of



days traditionally devoted to set piece debates on certain subjects and added them up – five days on defence, two before European Union council meetings, one on Welsh Affairs, one on Public Accounts Committee reports et cetera. The Backbench Business Committee said it would start from the presumption that, for the first session, there would continue to be debates on these subjects. In practice, the demand from backbenchers for debates on other subjects and a shortage of direct representation to the committee for debates on these regular subjects has caused a shift of emphasis, not without some unhappiness.

For example, just before Christmas each year there used to be two debates on the Floor of the House on the forthcoming European Union council and on fishing. In 2010, Members representing fishing communities, were allocated a three hour debate in Westminster Hall instead; and the Backbench Business Committee, not having received substantial representations from

Members, did not allocate any time for a general debate prior to the EU council.

The definition of what should count as backbench business has also proved a problem. The Standing Order sets out the items which it is not – government legislation, opposition days, private Members' Bills etc. But it remains open to the government to find days of general debates on matters of their own choice. Problems have arisen about such items as reports from the Standards and Privileges or Procedure Committees – the sort of thing which would have been loosely called "House business" in the past – though that term is more an indication of whether the government would put a whip on than of the nature of the business. Both the committee and the government business managers have been wary about setting precedents in this experimental period.

New practices

One innovation has been providing an opportunity for the Chair of a select committee to present a report on the Floor of the House. This has been done as an experiment, as the first item on a backbench day.

The Chair moves a procedural motion to take note of the publication of the report. Other Members then take part by intervening on the chair. After 15 minutes, the question is put and agreed without a division. Ideally the committee would like proceedings to take place in the same format as a ministerial statement, with others asking questions, but this may require changes to the Standing Orders.

An adaptation of existing practice has been the arrangements for the last sitting day before a major recess – four times a year.

These used to comprise a series of speeches by Backbenchers on any subject of

their concern with a reply at the end from the Deputy Leader of the House. This has always been a useful outlet for Members to air constituency issues when there is no other opportunity. The Backbench Business Committee asked for Members to give advance notice of their subjects so that they could be grouped together by department. This then gives rise to a mini-debate to which Ministers from the relevant departments provide an answer. The final part of this debate remains general with a reply by the Deputy Leader of the House.

One of the consequences of backbench business is that within a single debate, there is more time for Backbenchers because the Minister and the opposition shadow only speak once. In a general debate in the past, there would be front bench speeches from both sides both at the beginning and the end.

After some experimentation, the usual practice now is for the backbench Member who is in charge of the debate to speak first and the Minister to speak at the end of the debate, preceded by the opposition shadow. This is because Members generally prefer to speak before the minister, so that the latter's comments reflect what has been said earlier. Debates are sometimes arranged differently – with the Minister speaking earlier in the debate, especially of the government has something substantive to say. It has also become the normal practice for the Member in charge of the debate to speak for a couple of minutes at the end.

The debate ends as with other proceedings with a decision by the House. In some cases there have been votes, in others the motion has been agreed without division. Amendments have been tabled and some selected.

At an early stage the government tabled an amendment to a backbench motion to leave out all the effective words – as it would

on an Opposition day – and the Speaker did not select that amendment. Since then the government has been more cautious, sometimes choosing to allow a motion with which they slightly disagree to be passed without a vote.

Staff

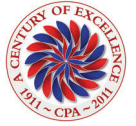
The staff that will be supporting the committee will be drawn from the Table Office without any additional resources. The Principal Clerk of the Table Office acts as the procedural adviser, while the day to day organization is carried out by a Senior Clerk, supported by one administrative assistant. Although the weekly committee meetings do not require a substantial amount of paper, the task of organizing the debates on backbench days does require a significant time commitment.

The committee set out its provisional approach in a special report in July 2010. Its website lists its decisions and these are also set out in the future business section of the daily Order Paper.

Conclusion

Backbench business has been experimental, not least because the Members were only appointed for one session rather than the whole Parliament and the operation of the committee is to be reviewed after that first session. More recently however government spokesmen have re-affirmed the commitment in the Coalition government's programme to move to a House Business Committee in the third session of the current Parliament, likely in about 2013.

The general feeling seems to be that this innovation has made a difference and a positive one at that. The new procedure seems popular with Members, with both debating time over-subscribed and a healthy stream of Members appearing at the weekly meetings with substantive propositions for debate.



UN WOMEN: WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO STRENGTHEN WOMEN’S ACCESS TO POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP

UN Women is working in the U.K. and globally to make women “agents of change”, especially by encouraging and assisting them to stand for election to Parliaments, a key place to effect change in every society.

Ms Alice Fookes.

Ms Fookes is an active volunteer member of the UN Women UK London Committee. Using her skills as a teacher she devised, developed and implemented UN WOMEN U.K.’s Education and Training Programme.

UN Women is the voice of women at the United Nations. In February, Michelle Bachelet, Under-Secretary-General, launched UN Women, the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. UK Board Member and former British Ambassador, Ms Kathryn Colvin said “the time for action is now! What better moment could there be than the launch of UN Women to push for greater representation for women in leading positions worldwide?”

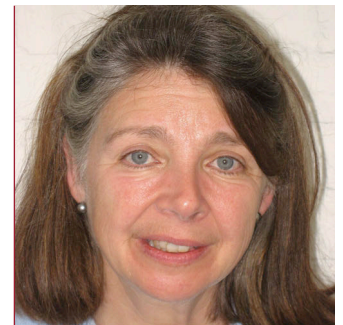
This year UN Women is delighted to celebrate with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association its Conference theme “Reinforcing Democracy”.

The recent CPA Gender and Democracy Seminar in New Zealand, which used the Commonwealth’s theme of “Women as Agents of Change” reflects the priority given to extending gender equality. The aim of the event was to foster closer

relationships and networks. It acted as the catalyst for professional development through knowledge sharing and capacity building. Strategies to strengthen and mentor women Parliamentarians as well as potential candidates in the Pacific Region were established. This excellent example of good practice is one that UN Women would like to see endorsed by governments across the world.

Achieving and establishing democracy is the beginning of the political process; reinforcing and strengthening it is the next step. In reality this means men and women having equal access to the political process. Unfortunately in many countries this does not happen.

So why is it so important for women to have a genuinely equal part in political and parliamentary processes? Women’s political engagement takes place in different contexts within different political frameworks. Generally,



Ms Alice Fookes.

though, women who are able to participate, do so at much lower levels than men. True democracy is defined by men and women working together equally in the political system. So women’s reduced political participation impedes the quality of governance. It holds back women’s human rights and opportunities for development. One half of the electorate, women, is in effect partly or totally disenfranchised.



The first Executive Director and Under-Secretary-General of UN Women, Ms Michelle Bachelet.

“Women are the greatest untapped resource in the world; there is a direct correlation between women’s empowerment and the growth of national GDP; how can we afford not to give women and men equal participation in the building of stable and peaceful societies?” says President of UN WOMEN UK Ms Jan Grasty.

Studies by UN Women show that higher numbers of women in Parliament generally contribute to a stronger focus on women’s issues. To engage in public decision-making women must be equal partners in the political system. Women are outnumbered 4 to 1 in Legislatures around the world. Political accountability to women begins by increasing the number of women in decision-making positions. Where women’s voices are heard, policy better reflects their lives. Concerns

directly affecting women such as reproductive rights, gender based violence and gender equality in electoral processes, the labour market and education are more likely to be better heard, expressed and dealt with by women working with men to formulate policy, parliamentary process and law.

Barriers to women joining the political process begin in childhood. It starts in the home. Many women have no say in vital everyday decisions such as their own healthcare or household purchases. Early marriage has the biggest impact, disempowering girls throughout their lives. In Nigeria, for example, women who married under 18 are 80 per cent more likely to report that they have no say on decisions within the household, than women who married later.

Breaking down barriers cannot be tackled by any one

organization. It has to be a recognized goal of governments and elected representatives, national and local, working in partnership with the corporate sector, NGOs, civil society and women’s political organizations. Objectives need to include education, continuing professional development, funding and support. Quotas and other temporary measures, such as reserved seats, are a proven means for supporting women’s engagement in political competition.

UN Women’s overseas programmes are participatory, responsive, equitable and inclusive. For example, this year UN WOMEN is implementing a programme in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan which promotes women’s political participation for gender-responsive governance.

Last year I visited four UN Women programmes in Lima, Peru. A group of 660 female small-business owners were consulted and offered an education programme to improve their personal, social and business capacities. This holistic training provides important preparatory groundwork for enabling women to become more visible in their communities and in political decision making.

We have seen that women cannot, in isolation, become “agents of change” – it’s a gradual process of recognition, partnerships and education.

The achievement of gender equality across legislative and government systems will, without doubt, strengthen and reinforce democracies throughout the world.

www.unwomenuk.org

CPA U.K. – TAKING WESTMINSTER TO THE WORLD

Mr Andrew Tuggey, DL

Mr Tuggey is a former soldier and defence diplomat. He assumed his current appointment with CPA UK in 2004. He is HM Deputy Lieutenant in Gwent where he also chairs ABF The Soldiers' Charity.



Mr Andrew Tuggey

CPA U.K. works to strengthen parliamentary democracy on behalf of Westminster and the wider CPA. Our international parliamentary outreach work of parliamentary diplomacy and parliamentary strengthening programmes takes Westminster to the world and provides a window on the British Houses of Parliament.

CPA U.K. is funded by Parliament and has an Executive Committee of 20 Members from both Houses. Our annual seminars and workshops address parliamentary practice and procedures: governance conferences challenge parliamentarians to consider their responsibilities in other important areas such as; climate change, development, human rights, maternal and child health, the under-representation of women, peacebuilding and conflict resolution: formal bilateral inward and outward delegations facilitate

greater understanding and networking amongst Parliamentarians.

However, the fast-growing area of CPA U.K.'s work is parliamentary strengthening when parliamentarians, clerks and officials from Westminster and partner parliaments interact and learn from each other. CPA U.K. is working with legislatures in Botswana, Brunei, Georgia, Guyana, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Mozambique, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Ukraine, and there are plans to work with others.

The capacity-building projects and linked MP2MP exchanges are hugely rewarding for all involved and are very much a two-way street. With innovative cost-sharing initiatives coming into place to leverage funding to deliver more for less, but at the same time provide best value for tax-payers' money, CPA U.K. works bilaterally and in consortia with international organisations and others. We also consider that there are untapped opportunities in the field for closer cooperation between the CPA regions.

Such initiatives are essential given the downward pressure on finances and the rising pressure to meet the increasing demand for parliamentary strengthening and other CPA activities. For CPA U.K. to deliver more with less requires a rigorous set of objectives, costed business plans, efficient project

and risk management, and the development of a realistic system to measure and evaluate tangible and intangible outputs.

Under the leadership of the Chair, Rt Hon. Sir Alan Haselhurst, MP, and Members of its Executive Committee, CPA U.K. has re-structured to implement the new strategy. Three geographic operational teams have been created to deliver its work in a more cohesive, focussed and cost-effective manner. As shown in the organogram, old job-titles for staff have been replaced with ones that describe more accurately the work of the appointment, and greater emphasis is placed on communications and the management of change.

Looking to the future, the main emphasis of CPA UK's work will continue to be with partner Commonwealth parliaments, but recent developments in the Middle East have created a growing thirst for parliamentary democracy. CPA U.K. is involved in capacity-building programmes in the Middle East with U.K. and other partners. The ethos and principles of the CPA and the Commonwealth attract aspiring and embryo democracies and CPA U.K. sees itself playing a part in peace, stability and growth. With other CPA branches and regions joined in this quest a huge difference can be made by our evolving Association and Commonwealth.



THE CENTENNIAL COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PARLIAMENT

Ms Helen Haywood.

Ms Haywood has worked for CPA UK since 1995. With her job-share colleague Susan Holmes, she is jointly project managing the Centennial Commonwealth Youth Parliament. She assisted with the previous Commonwealth Youth Parliament held in the U.K. in 2000.



Ms Helen Haywood

CPA U.K. is excited to be working with the CPA HQ Secretariat in planning the next and fourth Commonwealth Youth Parliament (CYP). It is a fitting event to demonstrate the organization's commitment to engaging the younger generation in politics, Parliament and the Commonwealth.

The 4th CYP will also mark the Centenary of the founding of the original Association – an appropriate time to look forward as well as looking back and commemorating what has gone before; Youth events explore potential and excite the interest of new generations.

The intention is to involve representatives from as many Commonwealth countries as possible – although the participants will not represent their own countries like they do at Youth CHOGMs. The youth Parliamentarians will work together in party caucuses, designing policy and identifying priorities which interest and impact upon them as representatives of young people worldwide.

Each CPA Member Parliament will have the opportunity to nominate up to two participants within the age-range 18-29; an equal gender balance is a key objective for the event.

House of Lords Chamber

The highlight of this year's CYP is that the final debate will take place in the House of Lords Chamber. This will be just the fourth time that the chamber has been used by non-

Parliamentarians and for non-parliamentary business. This is a truly exciting opportunity for those chosen to represent their Parliaments, their countries and the Association. As well as the core group of youth Parliamentarians from around the Commonwealth, CPA U.K. is working with the U.K. Parliament's Outreach Team to invite an additional group of young people from the Commonwealth Diaspora who will join in the chamber event. The third group of participants is U.K. Parliamentarians; invitations will be issued to all members of the U.K. Parliament to sit side by side with the youth Parliamentarians. For Members of the House of Commons this will be a unique opportunity as it is the first time in the history of the British Parliament that they have been permitted to sit on the red benches; although this may be an incentive for them to attend, the potential for fresh, diverse and thought-provoking debate will be the major draw.

Climate Change

The keynote subject for the CYP is climate change. CPA U.K. has previously held three international parliamentary conferences on climate change and the CPA Secretariat has established a Climate Change Task Force which harnesses the interest of parliamentarians in the issue and recognises that it needs to remain high on the agenda for discussion and action. In addition, CPA HQ hopes to collaborate once again with the World Bank Institute

(WBI) as it has previously on a number of issue-based initiatives; WBI has identified the effectiveness of youth networks in its climate change work and so there is obvious potential for working together on the issue both at the event and on an ongoing basis.

Legacy

Whilst being an exciting set-piece event, CPA U.K. is keen that all participants are conscious of the legacy opportunities. From the outset, participants will be encouraged to consider how they can effectively and innovatively share the benefits of their attendance with as wide a group as possible. A toolkit for running youth Parliaments will be updated and distributed to the CYP participants and nominating Parliaments which will hopefully inspire similar projects to be run in-country.

CPA U.K. and the CPA Secretariat are very much looking forward to welcoming the next generation of prime ministers, ministers and Parliamentarians to its Centennial Youth Parliament. The hosts will ensure that the framework is in place for a successful event, however like all CPA meetings, it is the contributions of the participants which will ensure its success.

If you would like to find out more about nominating a youth Parliamentarian please contact Ms Helen Haywood or Ms Susan Holmes at CPA U.K., or Ms Arlene Bussette at the CPA Secretariat.

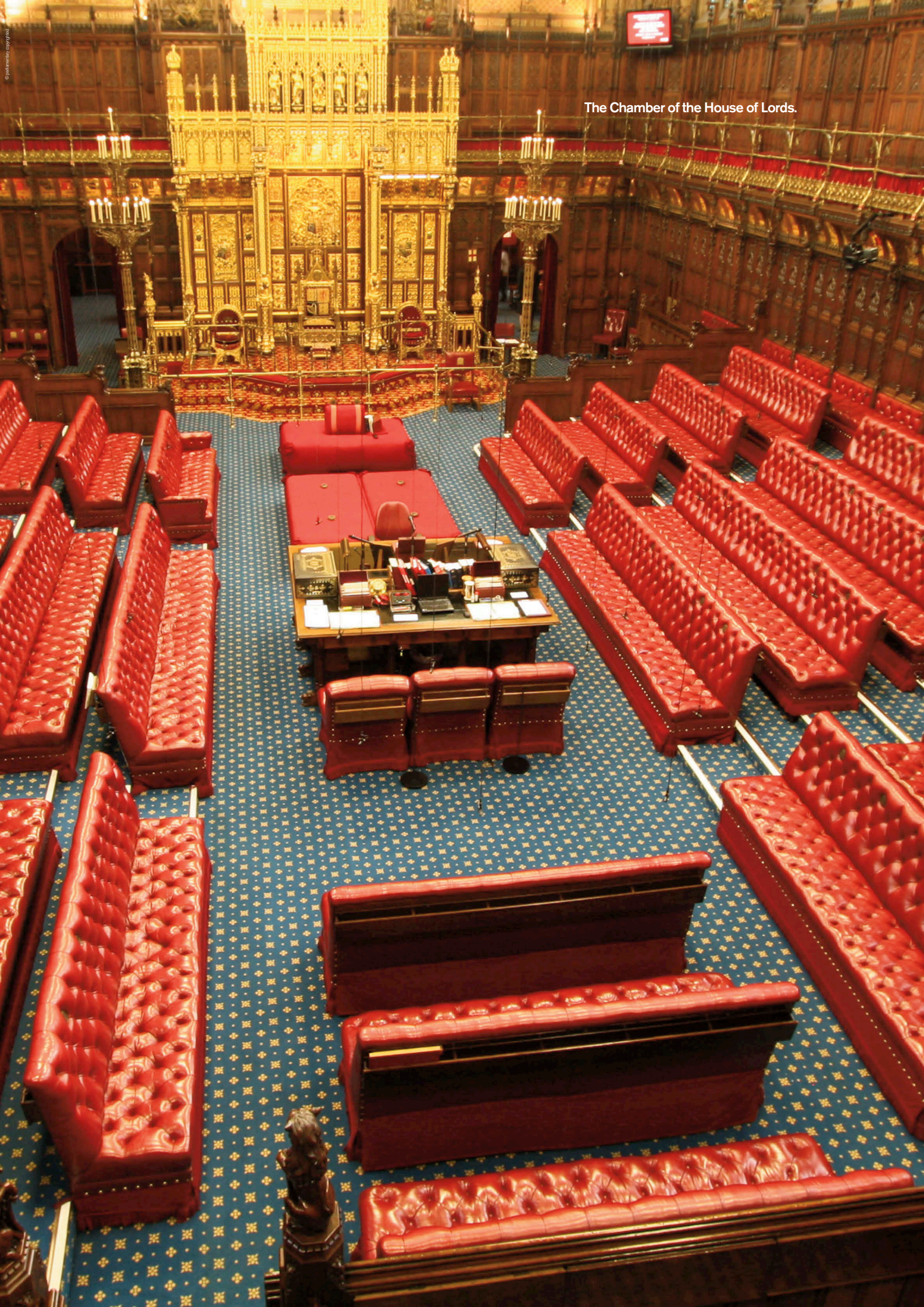




The U.K. Parliament occupies a prominent place in London and in U.K. politics.



The Speaker's Chair and the Table of the House of Commons.



The Chamber of the House of Lords.

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