

Evan Harris's speech in proposing to delete the support for the bill in the "Protect the NHS" motion

This is not just any call for a separate vote on lines 32-3 of the "Shirley Williams motion". This is the "William Beveridge" call for a separate vote on lines 32-3 of the motion.

I have no doubt of the sincerity of Judith, Shirley and her colleagues and the huge efforts they have made to amend the bill. Of course we should thank them.

Each amendment, after detailed negotiation, had to be extracted from the Government like the pulling of teeth. But it is still nothing like what we called for in Sheffield in March last year.

In fact, it seems that Andrew Lansley has conceded lots of things - except much of what we called for in Sheffield.

- There will not be a single councillor on any commissioning group
- There is not even the guarantee of a majority of elected members on Health and Wellbeing Boards
- There is no right of HWBs to overrule commissioners on their plan.
- There is not even a statutory right for HWBs to appeal a commissioning plan, not even to the super quango the NHS Commissioning Board
- There is no block on the wholesale outsourcing of commissioning work to private companies with their vested interests. Commissioning should be a public function. The spending of £60 billion of public money SHOULD be a public function.
- There is no requirement to avoid the destabilization of existing health services – for example emergency - from the outsourcing of other services to private companies. To ensure that by, say, the outsourcing of elective orthopaedics you don't wreck a trauma

service.

- After our motion the ability of Monitor to require commissioner to promote the market was curtailed. But instead, the bill has been changed to directly require commissioners to marketise by a legal duty.

On Friday after all the amendments had been made, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists met and subjected the bill to the sort of detailed examination that only gynaecologists can do. And they chose to reject the bill.

It is a generally good idea not to argue too much with your gynaecologist I am told.

The final reason to take out lines 32 and 33 is because the Government has not told us the risk, they have not told us what they know. They have not published the Risk Register. They may well want to keep that secret but the Information Commissioner ruled against them and so now so has the court. They should publish the risk register. We - as a party that has long supported Freedom of Information and the Rule of Law - should not be supporting legislation when the Government withholds what they know about the risks.

By removing these two lines and withholding our support for the bill we can help protect three vital national institutions,

- the NHS – under pressure but still doing well,
- Shirley Williams – definitely still in her prime; and dare I say
- the primacy of the Lib Dem Conference for making policy.