



THIS WEEK IN PARLIAMENT– 6-9 February 2017

Welcome to my *This Week in Parliament*, my weekly newsletter on events and developments in Parliament. **Your feedback is always welcome!**

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As was the case last week, business in Parliament was dominated by consideration of the EU (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill. Over three days, amendments and new clauses to the Bill were debated covering a wide range of issues; what role Parliament will play, the status of EU nationals and what will be negotiated. The Bill has passed without being amended and will now be considered by the House of Lords from 20 February. Away from Brexit, there was further discussion of a Trump state visit and I met up with a group from Bridgend College who were in London to receive an award and on Thursday hosted a Disability Confident event for business in Bridgend. Parliament is now in recess until Monday 20 February, so the next edition will be published on or soon after 24 February.

Monday

Day 1 of 3 debates on the remaining stages of the EU (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill started with an unusual statement from the Speaker and a statement from the Prime Minister on the Informal European Council the previous weekend.

The role of Speaker is as a neutral arbiter of debates in the House and also acts as a representative of the Chamber (more on the role is available [here](#)). At the start of proceedings on Monday, Mr. Speaker took the unusual step of making a personal statement in response to a [question](#) about the proposed State Visit for President Trump and the role Parliament might play in this.



Mr. Speaker: *I will say this: an address by a foreign leader to both Houses of Parliament is not an automatic right; it is an earned honour. Moreover, there are many precedents for state visits to take place in our country that do not include an address to both Houses of Parliament. That is the first point.*

I must say to the hon. Gentleman, to all who have signed his early-day motion and to others with strong views about this matter on either side of the argument that before the imposition of the migrant ban, I would myself have been strongly opposed to an address by

President Trump in Westminster Hall, but after the imposition of the migrant ban by President Trump, I am even more strongly opposed to an address by President Trump in Westminster Hall.

Prime Minister's statement

Following every European Council, the Prime Minister reports back to the House of Commons on what was discussed. While Brexit is now a permanent item on the agenda, it is not the only subject of these meetings. Wider international problems are considered including amongst other things the migration crisis;



Keith Vaz (Leicester East, Lab): *May I welcome the €200 million that have been pledged for the Mediterranean crisis? As the right hon. Lady knows, 3,800 people have travelled from Libya to Italy since 1 January. I ask her to be very careful with regard to the Libyan coastguard, because there is strong evidence that it is working with people smugglers to allow these boats to leave Libyan waters. How much of that money will actually be used to counter the work of the criminal gangs?*

The Prime Minister: *The work we are doing with the Libyan coastguard is of course about training its people to be able to do the job that we all expect them to do and that many of them want to be able to do. Separately from that, we will be working to enhance our ability to work across borders and through international agreements, using things such as joint investigation teams, to ensure that we are catching these criminal gangs. We have put some extra effort into this. I think we have to put even more effort into it in the future.*

It also emerged in the statement that the Government will not make a separate decision on the status of EU nationals living in the UK and UK nationals living in the EU, this issue will be negotiated as part of the wider negotiations on Brexit;

On the issue of acquired rights, the general view was that we should reach an agreement that applied equally to the other 27 member states and the UK, which is why we think a unilateral decision from the UK is not the right way forward. As I have said before, however, EU citizens living in the UK make a vital contribution to our economy and our society, and without them we would be poorer and our public services weaker. We will therefore make securing a reciprocal agreement that will guarantee their status a priority as soon as the negotiations begin, and I want to see this agreed as soon as possible, because that is in everyone's interests.

European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill—Day One

Over three days this week, the House of Commons has discussed in great detail the Bill that would give the Prime Minister the authority to invoke Article 50. Normally, a Bill would be considered by a small committee of MPs over a number of weeks. On this occasion, the Committee has been the whole House and the meetings have been condensed into three long days of debate. The days have been organised around amendments tabled to the Bill on a range of subjects. It is impossible here to relay everything in detail, so the focus will be on the key theme and outcomes of each day.

On Monday, the theme was Parliamentary oversight of the negotiations. Amendments and new clauses were focused on requiring the Government to report back to Parliament on various aspects of the negotiation and other subjects including guaranteeing the rights of EU nationals in the UK—you can see all of the new clauses amendments [here](#).

EU Nationals



Harriet Harman (Camberwell and Peckham, Lab): *I rise to support new clause 57, which was tabled in my name and the names of other members of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, with the support of right hon. and hon. Members from both sides of the House.*

This is about 3 million people and their families—EU citizens whose future here has been thrown into doubt by the decision in June that the UK should leave the EU. There is nothing about the cloud of uncertainty that they now live under that is their own fault. If we accept the new clause, we can put their minds at rest and let them look to the future.

Members on both sides of the House will know the people whose lives we are talking about. Some, such as those from France and Spain, have been here for decades. They have children and grandchildren living here. They work in and are part of their local community. It is unthinkable that they would be deported and their families divided because we have decided to leave the EU. Let us put their minds at rest and assure them and their families that our decision to leave the EU will not change their right to be here. Their anxiety is palpable.

Alberto Costa (South Leicestershire, Con): *I do not propose to speak for more than a few minutes. I have been wrestling with this matter for months, and in particular I have wrestled with it over the course of the weekend. This matter affects my constituents in South Leicestershire—and not just them—many of whom have come to see me to explain the problems, for example about children at school, which has been mentioned by other hon. Members.*

I was the son of Italian immigrants in Glasgow in the 1970s, and I remember how it felt to be the only son of an immigrant in a classroom full of Scottish people. I do not want any EU national child across the United Kingdom to feel the way that I felt at times in school in the 1970s. However, there is more than simply anecdotal evidence that the situation now caused by Brexit is affecting the wellbeing of families. Such concerns have been raised by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), a fellow east midlands Member for whom I have nothing but the utmost respect. As I have argued with colleagues in the Chamber—we should be saying it far more loudly—EU nationals have contributed an enormous amount to the success and wellbeing of our United Kingdom, as did my parents over 50 years.

However, I have decided to vote against the amendment on this matter. As I said at the outset, I have wrestled with this decision, because it affects my family personally. I will explain why I have decided to do this. Ultimately, it is because the deal that will be reached with the EU will be not just legal, but also political. It will be about personalities: about how the Prime Minister and her team get on with the other side.

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Scrutiny



Chris Leslie (Nottingham East, Lab): *That is why I will briefly go through some of the new clauses I have tabled. For the sake of argument, let us take the first one, new clause 20 on financial services. One could say that it is merely a small corner of Britain's GDP, but it provides £67 billion of revenue for all our schools and hospitals. If we mess around with that sector in the wrong way, we will all be poorer and our public services will be poorer as a result.*

New clause 20 suggests that there should be a report twice a year on where we are going on one of those questions that was not contained in the White Paper: "What is our progress towards a smooth transition from the existing open market access, where we have passports, to the new arrangements, whatever they are going to be?" The White Paper merely says, "We'd quite like to have the freest possible trade," but it says nothing about what will happen on mutual co-operation, regulation and oversight; whether we will be able to have permanent equivalence rights for some trades; or whether UK firms will have time to adjust.

Those issues already pose a clear and present danger to our economy. HSBC says that 1,000 jobs are going to go, Lloyd's of London is moving some of its activities, UBS is moving 1,000 jobs, and J.P. Morgan has said that potentially 4,000 jobs will go. Firms are voting with their feet already, yet the White Paper hardly touches on this question.

I was able to raise again the need for reassurances to be given on tariff free access to the Single Market in the context of an amendment aimed at guaranteeing funding for Wales post-Brexit;

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr, Plaid Cymru): *In a similar manner, concessions have reportedly been made in certain sectors of the economy. We have already heard about Nissan in Sunderland and, as we would expect, the City of London. New clause 159 calls on the Government to show Wales a similar level of consideration by committing to consult on a territorial exemption when the Prime Minister drags the UK out of the single market.*

Madeleine Moon MP: *Last week, I asked about guarantees about tariffs, specifically that there be no tariffs on Ford engines built in my constituency and exported out of Wales. I was told that there was no guarantee but that there was a commitment. Is a commitment good enough for Wales? Is it good enough or the United Kingdom given that we are now £1.8 trillion in debt—a national debt that is growing by more than £5,000 a second?*



At the end of Day One, none of the new clauses or amendments were adopted by the House.

Tuesday

On Tuesday morning, I chaired a Delegated Legislation Committee on a Statutory Instrument—the draft Investment Bank (Amendment of Definition) and Special Administration (Amendment) Regulations 2017. Delegated Legislation is usually uncontroversial and makes small changes to existing pieces of legislation - a more detailed explanation is available [here](#). Every member of the Committee is given a detailed Impact Assessment explaining the background to the change. All of these are available online (a certain cure for insomnia!) including the one made available for the [meeting](#) on Tuesday. This, I might add, is considerably more detailed than the White Paper produced by the Government last week on Brexit. The need for

Impact Assessments on all areas affected by Brexit has been at the heart of the debates this week. You can read the debate on the Statutory Instrument [here](#).

European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill—Day Two

Theme for Tuesday as primarily what role Parliament would have in approving the final deal the Government negotiates with the EU and whether if Parliament did have a vote on the deal and did not approve it, what would happen next. In a rare move, the [debate](#) started with the Government announcing a concession but did not table it as an amendment.

The Minister of State for Exiting the EU, David Jones stated;



I hope that this will be helpful to him. He has mentioned the fact that the Government have made a commitment to a vote at the end of the procedure. Later, when I address the House, I will be outlining what I intend that vote shall be, but it may be of assistance to him now to know what is proposed. First of all, we intend that the vote will cover not only the withdrawal arrangements but also the future relationship with the European Union. Furthermore, I can confirm that the Government will bring forward a motion on the final agreement, to be approved by both Houses of Parliament before it is concluded. We expect and intend that this will happen before the European Parliament debates and votes on the final agreement. I hope that is of assistance.

The debate that followed focused on the implications of this and exactly what would happen if the deal was rejected;

Nick Clegg (Sheffield Hallam, Lib Dem): *Will the Minister stress to the Committee again that that applies to both the withdrawal agreement and a final agreement on the future relationship between the UK and the EU? It is my view, which is shared by many others, that the former is feasible within two years but the latter is highly unlikely. What will happen if a withdrawal agreement is reached but not a new agreement between the UK and the EU?*



Mr. David Jones (Minister of State): *I must preface what I am about to say by saying that we do not expect that we will not achieve such an agreement, but my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already made it clear that if we cannot come to an agreement, we will have to fall back on other arrangements. The Government have consistently been clear about that.*

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth, Lab): *The Minister raised our hopes for a second, and then I felt myself deflate as he said that if things did not work out, we would*

“fall back on other arrangements.” —[Official Report, 25 January 2017; Vol. 620, c. 295.]

Can he be absolutely clear about what he meant by falling back on other arrangements?

Mr. David Jones (Minister of State): *It would depend on precisely what was agreed, but if there were no agreement at all, which I think is an extremely unlikely scenario, ultimately we would be falling back on World Trade Organisation arrangements. That is nothing new. It has been made very clear previously, including by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.*

Later in the afternoon, I was able to make a contribution about the tenor of our debates;



Madeleine Moon MP: *The right hon. Lady is making a very honest speech, and I commend her for on her honesty and decency.*

We have just heard three excellent, calm, rational speeches explaining the things that are tearing this country apart. Is it not now time for us all to understand that not only are we talking to our own constituents, but that this House is being listened to across the world, that the people who will be deciding on Brexit are also listening, and that those who are ever more triumphalist, aggressive and bellicose will be the worst enemies when it comes to our getting to where we will need to be?

Anna Soubry MP (Broxtowe, Con): *I completely agree with the hon. Lady, and this is part of the bringing together, the forming and building of a consensus not just in this place—I do not know why we should be so frightened of that here—but across the country at large. Families, friends and communities remain divided and we must now come together.*

As happened on Tuesday, other than the concession given by the Minister, which was not written into the Bill, the Bill passed without amendment.

Wednesday

Away from the Chamber, other things have happened this week. It was with great pleasure that I met up with the Principal of Bridgend College, Simon Pirotte and his team who were in London to receive an award from the Association of Colleges for Development of Transferable Skills recognising the College's 'Be all that you can be' programme. The programme is designed to equip students with transferable skills in addition to their main qualifications which will help them in employment and higher education.



European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill—Day Two

New clauses and amendments sought to set out statutory objectives that the Government should have regard to in carrying out the negotiations included tariff free trading arrangements and the UK's continuing participation in organisations such as the European Safety Agency, Euratom and schemes such as the Protected designation of origin scheme which gives protected status to amongst other things Melton Mowbray port pies. In addition, requiring the Government to ensure that existing rights (such as employment rights) are maintained.

Ed Vaizey (Wantage, Con): *I am a loyal Conservative Member, but the point made about Germany's trade with China was well made. People refer constantly to free trade treaties. I hope we will be able to negotiate them within a matter of days of leaving the European Union, but it strikes me that people are unaware of what happens in the real world if they think that our farmers, who are the best example, will simply sign up without a murmur to free trade treaties with countries such as the United States, which has very different welfare standards from ours. I understand the arguments of those who support free trade with, for example, developing nations, and I understand people who say that we should open our markets to them and support our farmers in different ways, but our farmers will have severe concerns. We also have to wonder whether developing nations have the same welfare standards as us.*



Coming out of Euratom would present some difficult issues, including a requirement to conclude new bilateral co-operation agreements with the United States and approximately 20 other countries to maintain our access to intellectual property and nuclear technologies; removing the requirement for the UK to comply with Euratom's safety regimes, which would prevent other countries from collaborating with us; and further potential delays and cost increases to the nuclear new build programme.

Trade is key issue—as the fall back position described by the Government on Tuesday would mean WTO rules. Being outside the EU from a trade point of view is worrying for many.

Adrian Bailey (West Bromwich West): *The right hon. Gentleman argues that our membership of the EU inhibits our ability to trade with the expanding economies of the rest of the world. If so, will he explain why Germany exports nearly four times as much as we do to China and exceeds our exports to both India and Brazil, the other fast-growing economies, and why France also exports more to China and Brazil than we do? What is it that they do in the EU that we will do when we come out?*

At the end of proceedings, the Bill again passed without any amendments or clauses added to it. It now proceeds to the House of Lords before returning to the Commons. The Minister of State explained why the Government had not accepted any of the changes proposed;

David Jones (Minister of State): *The amendments serve as a valuable reminder of the numerous important matters that will need to be considered and discussed throughout the process of negotiation. They seek to ensure that specific aspects of our future relationship with the European Union are prioritised by the Government. Let me take this opportunity to tell the House once again that we are committed to delivering the best possible deal for the whole of the United Kingdom. However, we can only set about delivering that deal after we have triggered article 50. It is not appropriate, therefore, to seek to tie the hands of the Government on individual policy areas at this stage; that could only serve to jeopardise our negotiating position.*

I will do my best to respond to each of the amendments, given their broad scope, but for the avoidance of doubt, there is a common response to them all: elementally, this is a straightforward procedural Bill that serves only to give the Prime Minister the power to trigger article 50 and thereby respect the result of the referendum. As a consequence, these amendments are not for this Bill. Instead, they are for the many future debates that will take place in this House

Thursday

On Wednesday, the Home Office published a [written statement](#) on the Dubs amendment which allowed for the transfer of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to the UK. The statement appeared to close the scheme as the Government specified the number of children accepted under the scheme to be 350, a number which is due to be reached shortly. In reaction to this, the Home Secretary came to the House to answer an [urgent question](#) where she faced hostile questioning about this decision and the timing of its announcement;

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West, SNP): *I am struggling to understand exactly what the Home Secretary is telling us. She says that the scheme is not closed, but she seems to have specified a number of 350, so that must mean that the scheme is closing once the 350 children get here. Will she clarify that? If that is the case, does she appreciate that that goes completely against the spirit of what was discussed in this House? I understand the “pull” argument, but thousands of children are already in Europe and many of them are unaccompanied and vulnerable.*

Lord Alfred Dubs described what was done yesterday as “shabby” and deceitful. It seems that the Government tried to sneak out what they knew would be an unpopular announcement when they were busy avoiding scrutiny of the Brexit deal in this House. Is that the shape of things to come? Is that what comes from cosying up to President Trump?

Disability Confident

On Thursday, I was back in the constituency for a seminar with the Department for Work and Pensions to talk to local employers about the positive benefits of employing people with disabilities. This is part of a programme called Disability Confident run by the Department for Work and Pensions to support employers in employing people with disabilities. More information is available [here](#).



At the event in the Heronstone Hotel, local employers heard from Steve Thorn President of CGI which employs 1700 locally and 70,000 worldwide providing hi tech security support services talk about the benefits his company has made by amending their recruitment and retention services to employ people with a wide range of disabilities. Steve has specialist support groups for staff who have a wide range of issues which impact on their employment from stammering to mental health, caring to autism. Steve has been awarded the Executive Disability Champion Award in 2016. You can read his speech via a separate link in the covering email.

We also heard from Bob Williams of Espack Eurologistica of the positive impact of employing people with disabilities. This is one of a range of seminars and networking meetings I am hosting with local employers.

Amongst the companies who attend the seminar, were Welsh Tree Felling (pictured here)

