



THIS WEEK IN PARLIAMENT 26 February - 02 March 2018

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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An interesting week in Parliament saw business swing back to more domestic concerns. Despite the ongoing background noise which Brexit has generated since the Referendum. The House took the time this week to scrutinise Government spending across several departments.

During these Debates, Members took another opportunity to raise the concerns about defence spending. And the handling of the Military by the Government.

With Conservative Members once again at war with each other over the Government's Brexit position, the risk exists that other issues will be forgotten. It is therefore equally important that Members continue to raise these concerns and draw attention to the Government's shortcomings.

Monday

The week began with [questions](#) to the Secretary of State for the Home Department. However, the House moved swiftly on to an Urgent question on Syria.

Syria: De-escalation Zones

The [Urgent Question](#) put to the Government sort to examine the Government's response to yet more bad news from Syria and what the UK's involvement in securing De-escalation Zones was.

[Mrs Madeleine Moon \(Bridgend\) \(Lab\)](#): The Foreign Secretary said that there can be no military victory in eastern Ghouta, but I fear that Russia, Iran and Assad are not looking for that sort of military victory. They are looking to weaken resistance and instil fear and tension—not only in the middle east but in north Africa and eastern Europe—and to build a cadre of battle-hardened troops and proven military weapons so that they can impose their order on the rest of the world. Does the Foreign Secretary accept that?

[The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs \(Boris Johnson\)](#): That may indeed be their ambition, but they have not an earthly chance of achieving it.

[Mrs Madeleine Moon \(Bridgend\) \(Lab\)](#): They are achieving it!



***The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson):** Well, as I told the House, there are still substantial numbers of people in Syria—around 4 million, which is around a quarter of the population—who are not under the regime’s control. Furthermore, the hon. Lady should remember that the Assad regime is basically a minority regime that seeks to impose itself on a Sunni majority in the country. It is sowing the seeds of its own destruction by its continued brutality. It is not a strategy that can work in the long term, which is why a political process has to begin now.*

The House then examined the Domestic Gas and Electricity (Tariff Cap) Bill, in the Chamber for its first reading.

Estimates Day Ministry of Defence

The first in a series of Estimates Day **debates** saw Members focus on the spending of the MoD. I took the opportunity to speak on my concerns about the efficiency of spending on the Army Reserve.

***Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab):** It is a great pleasure to follow the fantastic overview that the hon. Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) set out of the defence estimates. For Members who do not find themselves—as many of us do—becoming defence-obsessed, due to our concerns at the lack of funding being sent into the defence of this wonderful realm, it was a fantastic primer on the concerns that we must face as a country.*

I want to look at the reserve forces, an area that the hon. Gentleman also raised. I declare a sort of interest as the chair of the all-party group on reserves and cadets. I recently met an academic from the University of Bath, Dr Patrick Bury, who has been looking at the progress of the Future Reserves 2020 plan, the main purpose of which was to provide direct support to a reduced Army and to increase the reserves to 35,000. Following the meeting, I rather upset a Minister in the Ministry of Defence, who received more than 100 parliamentary questions in the lead-up to Christmas. He took me aside to remonstrate with me for giving him so much work. I pointed out that if he had answered some of the questions the first time around, there might have been 50% less questions, but that is the way of asking and pursuing parliamentary questions.



The information I will speak to in today’s debate is all provided—sometimes reluctantly, but it was provided eventually—by the Ministry of Defence through parliamentary questions. I am deeply concerned that the expenses involved in Future Reserves 2020 not only show a programme that is struggling to achieve its goals, but are such that we need either to redefine or to look at whether the money we are spending, given the outcomes we are achieving, would be better spent elsewhere. We all know that the Ministry of Defence cannot afford to waste that expense. Every penny counts in the Ministry of Defence.

To provide context and make the costs clear, what is the current reserve structure? The reserve model means that Army reservists sign a contract in which they commit to achieving a certain amount of training time, and to achieving training targets over a financial year. That involves 27 days’ training, including a two-week continuous period away, which is known as an annual camp. If the reservists achieve that commitment, they are considered to be fully trained and up to date, and ready to fulfil their role in supporting the Regular Army—in other words, they are deployable—and are rewarded with a tax-free bounty cash payment.

It goes without saying that, for a reservist to achieve a high level of practice and well-honed skills, they would need to achieve that minimum level of training. It is only 27 days. Many members of the armed forces parliamentary scheme spend more than 27 days in the armed forces and do not qualify to be reservists. They nevertheless give that

commitment. Unlike those in the armed forces parliamentary scheme, the reservist is not compelled to complete their commitment to get their pass-out certificate. They have only to complete a minimum of 27 days. The only compelling desire is achieving the tax-free bounty.

We can therefore use that tax-free bounty as a useful way of assessing how many people in the reserves are deployable. It is possible to be an Army reservist without achieving any training targets in a financial year, so if we want to know about the Army reserves, we need to look at how many achieve their bounties. Let us look at the cost of the programme. The easiest way to calculate the cost is to look at the bounty payments combined with the number of reservist service days claimed over the past few years. I am making a general assumption. A basic private's pay in April 2017 was £46.42 a day—some will earn more, and therefore my numbers might be lower, but I am giving the benefit of the doubt and working on the assumption that everybody gets the minimum payment.

In 2016-17, 1,008,290 reserve days were claimed, and 14,930 reservists qualified for their bounty. That resulted in a spend of £68 million—it was nearly £69 million. In the year 2015-16, 957,390 reserve service days were claimed, and 14,990 reservists qualified for their bounty. In 2014-15, 884,050 reserve service days were claimed, and 14,270 reservists qualified for their bounty. Therefore, despite the rising costs, and despite continual recruitment, the true number of qualified reservists has remained stable, at just less than 15,000. It is not just that we are failing to meet targets year on year, as pointed out by the hon. Member for Gainsborough, but we are not increasing our numbers of deployable reservists.

The wages and the bonuses are low.

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): What my hon. Friend is describing is fascinating. Does she agree that Army 2020 was really designed to give the Government political cover in the light of the reduction of the regular Army to 82,000? It is not just a question of the retraining days; it is a question of whether the 15,000 reservists to whom she referred can actually be deployed alongside regular troops. I am told that in some cases there is no joint training at all.

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): My hon. Friend is absolutely right. What we have here is a consistent pattern of only about 15,000 deployable reservists. Despite the money that has been poured into the reserve forces, we have not increased their number, but we have massively decreased the number of regulars. Our Army capability is therefore shrinking. That is something that we must be very worried about, but what worries me even more is the fact that we are spending huge amounts of money while receiving little or no return.

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend has referred to the significant reductions in the regular forces. As was mentioned earlier, a large number of former regular service personnel have moved into the reserves, but they may be doing so on a temporary basis. That may explain why so few people—in real terms—are achieving their bounty qualifications each year.

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): I intend to talk about the reserve bonus scheme in the next part of my speech. I am sure my hon. Friend will welcome that.

Part of the problem is that, despite the theory that employers would be willing, and even encouraged, to allow people to take their time to go to, for instance, the annual camp, it is not happening. As people are under pressure to



remain in work and to retain their jobs, they are not willing to give those 27 days. They are not able to make that commitment.

Further inefficient costs to the Army reserve can be seen when we look at the “regular to reserve” bonus scheme and its failure to retain personnel. The scheme was introduced in 2013 as a way of enticing former regular soldiers to join the reserves in order to keep their expertise within the military and pass it on to the new reserves who were being recruited. We were retaining capability, and also using the former regulars to train the reserves. The incentive for ex-regulars to join the scheme is, again, financial: a £10,000 bonus is paid in four instalments, provided that they meet the requirements of training and attendance at each stage.



As of October 2017, 4,350 ex-regular soldiers have joined the reserves under the scheme. At first that looks like a good number, but the question is, how many have been retained? In 2017, only 480 of those soldiers achieved all four instalments, which indicates a dropout rate of 89%. I accept that that figure does not take into account the fact that entry into the scheme may be staggered over the preceding four years, but it none the less demonstrates that retention of ex-regular soldiers in the Army reserve is a problem.

I can give an example. An ex-regular soldier who turned up at my house to do a piece of work had signed up for the reserve bonus scheme, and had found that once he had left the military and started work, the pressures of civilian life—being back with his family and getting into the new job—meant that he could not retain the commitment that he had thought he would want to ease his transition out of the military and into the civilian world. These are men and women with vital knowledge and expertise who are used to military life. Their retention is vital, but even with that offer of £10,000, there is not enough to keep them and for them to commit to what is being asked. This further suggests that the current model of the Army reserve just is not working.

The situation looks bad on its own, but if the cost of the scheme is taken into account, it looks a lot worse. Breaking down the entrants to the scheme into their respective ranks and assuming this distribution follows through the key milestone payments, and using these elements and combining wages and bonuses, the scheme so far has cost just over £29 million, with only 480 soldiers reaching all four payments. I am sorry to bat on about this, and I know the figures are boring, but I am deeply concerned. We have a reducing capability in our Army. We have been sold a pup, with a promise that the reserves would fill a gap in the regular forces, but that is not happening.

Defence is an expensive business—there is no getting around that—but it is also a business in which we cannot afford to lose highly skilled and highly able individuals willing to give the time and effort to get through their training so that they are deployable. I know that many Members of this House, including the Minister, are eager to fulfil our commitment to them so that they retain their membership of the reserves and their employability. I honour, and express my gratitude for, the service of all those reservists, but are we getting value for money in a way that allows us as a country to have the forces that we need? It is my concern that we do not, and the MOD’s own figures suggest that the reserves model as it stands cannot provide us with the numbers we need.

The challenges and menaces we face are very real. Many of our platforms are not fit for purpose and the readiness of our forces is just not in place, and we have heard about the disastrous Capita contract. I appreciate that the Min-

ister has apparently suggested that he will resign if the military is cut further, and I hope he does not have to resign, because he is a good Minister, whom we trust, rely on and respect, but we also need the Minister to hear the concerns that we are expressing.

None of us want our Army to be damaged. All of us know that our personnel can, when fully trained and fully committed, be some of the best in the world; that knowledge is shared across our NATO alliance. But we are getting weaker, and that is unacceptable. I call on the Minister to look at how we are spending in terms of the reserve forces.

Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making an important point about the numbers, but does she share my concern that a huge amount of experience is being lost from our military? There are people performing roles with a few years' experience who would have taken 10 or 15 years to reach that position in the past, and the experience of many of them—excellent soldiers and sailors though they are—might come under pressure in the fiercest of circumstances.



Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): My hon. Friend is right, and this is also making them so much easier to be bought off by companies who seek the expertise and qualifications they achieve in the military. They feel dissatisfaction when they see the forces they joined—particularly the Army—being hollowed out. That is leading many more to consider leaving.

I shall make one final comment. I have spoken to a young man who was working as a full-time reservist when I first met him. He has told me that a lot of his time as a full-time reservist was spent going out and trying to recruit. He said that one of the most frightening things was that so many of the youngsters he spoke to about joining the armed forces had no understanding of military life. They had no idea of what NATO stood for, for example. This is a wider problem that we as a country need to tackle. We need to get the message out about how invaluable our armed forces are and how critical it is that our young people should seek the life, the experience, the skills, the challenge and the satisfaction of a military career, whether as a reservist or full time.

Mark Tami (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend agree that we still need to do a lot more for people leaving the service? There are still too many ex-military personnel finding civilian life very difficult. Does she agree that we need to support them as they adapt?

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): I agree with my hon. Friend; it is difficult for people who have been in an all-encompassing environment to transition. I know many ex-MPs who have found it very difficult to transition out of this place, because it is not just a job; it is our whole life and requires great commitment. That is what the military is like as well, and that transition is grave.

I shall take no more interventions, but before I finally sit down, I want to make the point that life in the military does not mean that someone will get post-traumatic stress disorder. It worries me that that possibility seems to have got into the public consciousness. Life in the military will offer someone a chance to grow, to mature and to become an asset to their country, and I just wish that more people understood that, rather than thinking about the downsides of joining our military.

Members then moved on to [debating](#) the expenses of the Department for Exiting the European Union before and Adjournment [Debate](#) on Diabetes.

Tuesday

Questions to the Chancellor of the Exchequer

Tuesday began with [questions](#) to the Chancellor. As ever, the questions from Members ranged over several issues, Welsh Members took the chance to inquire about the Welsh economy.



[Jonathan Edwards \(Carmarthen East and Dinefwr\) \(PC\)](#): My question is this: what investment? The Government have broken their promise to electrify the main line between the two main cities in my country, they will not commit to the Swansea Bay tidal lagoon, and the Swansea Bay city deal is 90% Welsh public and private money. At the same time, the Government are subsidising the most expensive railway in the world—in England. When will the British Government stop taking Wales for a ride?

[The Financial Secretary to the Treasury \(Mel Stride\)](#): I am surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman level those accusations against the Government because, as I have explained, we set aside an additional £1.2 billion for Wales in the recent Budget. I have referred to the two city deals, and we are also backing the south Wales metro, as he will know. We are committed to agreeing further growth deals with north and south Wales.

Mental Health Act: CQC Report

Questions were followed by the Government responding to an [Urgent Question](#) on the Mental Health Act and the Care Quality Commission report.

[Dr Lisa Cameron \(East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow\) \(SNP\)](#): The report makes clear the need for a major shift in focus that will place patients at the centre of their care. What is required is a human rights approach in which the least restrictive option is adhered to. Detention must be the last resort.

A key issue is that patients feel invisible in the present system. Will the Minister go to the frontline? Will she visit the hospitals, speak to the staff about resourcing, and speak to the patients and the carers who are in, and have been through, the system? Will she hold the focus groups that are so badly needed with patients and carers to ensure that the system is overhauled and their voices are heard?

[The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health \(Jackie Doyle-Price\)](#): The ethos that the hon. Lady has outlined is very much the one that is being proposed by Sir Simon Wessely, which is why he is organising round tables, but I assure her that I am visiting services at the frontline as well. At the core of the point that she has made is the issue of a rights-centred approach for mental health patients, and that too is at the centre of Sir Simon's inquiry. Patients need to be empowered to ensure that they receive the right treatment. Central to that is the whole issue of consent, which is something that very much concerns me, and not just in the context of mental health. We may be able to take the lessons from Sir Simon Wessely's review and apply them elsewhere in the NHS.

This was immediately followed by another [Urgent Question](#) answered by the Office for Students. The House then held the First Reading of a Bill concerning Access to Banking Services.

Estimates Day

The second allotted day for Estimates saw the House debate spending on [Homelessness](#) and the costs of the Department for [Transport](#).

The day in the Chamber ended with an Adjournment [Debate](#) on Eating Disorders Awareness Week.

Defence Committee

Away from the Chamber, the Defence Committee held an [evidence](#) session on the recently announced [Modernising Defence Programme](#). The programme has seen the Defence side of the National Defence and Security Review made into a separate inquiry, the Committee was keen to ensure this would mean Defence got the money and attention

it needs.

Please see [here](#) for the minutes for last week's session on the Armed Forces Covenant.

Exiting the European Union Committee

This week the Committee took [evidence](#) from the former Director General of the World Trade Organisation, Pascal Lamy, on the UK's options for trade after leaving the EU. The witness compared Brexit to "getting an egg out of an omelette".

For the transcript of last week's session see [here](#).

Wednesday

Prime Ministers Questions

[Questions](#) to the Secretary of State for International Development preceded Prime Ministers [Questions](#) this week. Once again the Prime Minister was pressed on the Government's confused Brexit stance.

[Jeremy Corbyn \(Islington North\) \(Lab\)](#): *The endless round of after-dinner speeches by the Prime Minister on Europe does not really substitute for negotiations or for what is actually going to result from the negotiations.*

One of the sectors already suffering very badly is that of health and social care. It is highly reliant on migrant workers. We depend on them for our health and the care of those who need it. Is not the Prime Minister just a little bit concerned that European Union workers with vital skills are leaving Britain in unprecedented numbers now?

[The Prime Minister \(Mrs Theresa May\)](#): *As the right hon. Gentleman might have noticed from the last set of immigration figures, we actually still see more people coming into the UK from the European Union than are leaving the UK and going back to the European Union. We do have a care about the number of nurses and GPs that we have in the NHS. That is why we have set the highest levels of numbers of people in training for both nurses and GPs. It is why we have significantly increased the opportunities not just for people who are coming from the European Union to work in our national health service but for those people here in this country who want to work in our NHS to get those training places and do the excellent job that we know they will do for patients in our national health service.*



Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland: Border Arrangements

Immediately after PMQ's, an [Urgent Question](#) was asked over the leaked memo sent by Boris Johnson to the Prime Minister calling for a harder border in Northern Ireland. Controversy in the Chamber was caused when the Foreign Secretary left the House, leaving the Minister for the Cabinet Office to answer in his place.

[Emily Thornberry \(Islington South and Finsbury\) \(Lab\)](#): *To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—who seems to have run away—to make a statement on future border arrangements between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland following Britain's exit from the European Union.*

[The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster \(Mr David Lidington\)](#): *Mr Speaker, I have been asked to reply.*

The Government have been consistent in their commitments to Northern Ireland as the United Kingdom leaves the European Union. First, we will never accept any solutions that threaten the economic or constitutional integrity of the United Kingdom. Secondly, we will not accept a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, which would reverse the considerable progress made through the political process over recent decades. That position has been



consistent from the Prime Minister's article 50 letter through to our position paper published last summer and the Prime Minister's Florence speech last autumn.

Most recently, the Government enshrined both these commitments very clearly in the joint report we agreed with the European Union in December. That set out very clearly our

"commitment to preserving the integrity of"

our

"internal market and Northern Ireland's place within it".

It also included our

"guarantee of avoiding a hard border"

between Northern Ireland and Ireland, including any related checks and controls. These commitments were agreed collectively by the entire Cabinet, and I believe they have wide support across the House. Those commitments have not changed, nor will they.

A further [Urgent Question](#) on Burma Visas was asked by the International development Committee, before the House proceeded to the First Reading of a [Bill](#) on Social Media Service Providers.

These debates were followed by a [motion](#) on Independent Complaints and Grievance Policy. Before a [Bill](#) on the water level in waterways was Read. The day in the Chamber ended with an Adjournment [Debate](#) on Suspicious Deaths Abroad.

Anti-Corruption Strategy: Illegal Wildlife Trade

Away from the Chamber, I Chaired a [Debate](#) in Westminster Hall on strategies to prevent the illegal wildlife trade. I am pleased to say that Members held up their hands and acknowledged that more needs to be done in this area.

[Vernon Coaker \(Gedling\) \(Lab\)](#): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Moon. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing Central and Acton (Dr Huq) on securing this important debate. I do not want to speak for long, but I felt it was important to make a short contribution to the debate. To be frank, I felt somewhat guilty that I have not spoken much on this issue in my time in Parliament. Like many people, over the past year or two I have been moved by some of the things that I have seen on television and by things that I have read. I have been moved by the devastating figures that have started to emerge, thanks to the work of people such as my hon. Friend and others in the Chamber, and by organisations outside this House, some of whom are with us today.

The world—and ourselves, as a developed nation and a Parliament—is at a crossroads. It is not that the Government are not doing anything and do not care; that would clearly be ridiculous and not true. We do care, and so do a significant number of people across the world. The criminal gangs represent a very small minority, but unless we tackle them and work with other countries with a greater sense of urgency—so that the issue becomes a greater priority for our country, for the various international organisations, for the EU, for the various policing bodies, for the United Nations and for the Organisation of Africa Unity, and so on—our grandchildren will not see a wild elephant, except in a photo or perhaps in a zoo, where we really do not want to see them. They will not see a wild tiger, a wild rhinoceros or many other species of plant or tree, or whatever. Unless we wake up to this, people's grandchildren and great-grandchildren will look back at 2018 and say, "What were you doing? You were decision makers."

We in Parliament make the laws. We set the priorities for our Government, and our Government, through the international organisations to which we belong, can demand that priorities are set and action taken. So the question is: what did you do? Where were you? What did you say? When I found out about this debate, it made me think I had better start speaking up. It is a challenge for me, let alone the Government. We must demand that the Government make the issue a priority. It is not a case of blame; it is a case of saying, "For Christ's sake, let's wake up. For goodness' sake, let's look and see what is going on."

The figures say billions were made here, or billions were made there. We can argue about the figures, but countless billions of pounds are made by small numbers of gangs who are ruining our planet and our future. We must tackle them. We sometimes know who they are. We sometimes fail to implement existing laws and fail to take the proceeds of crime from people who have benefited from it, but why does that happen? The Minister does not want that to happen. The Prime Minister does not want that to happen. The Prime Minister of our dreams would not want that to happen. It does not matter which party is in power; it happens, and it carries on happening. The same can be said about the international bodies we belong to.



Billions of pounds are made. The figures produced by various people are shocking. When we see the pictures it brings tears to our eyes, but crying about it does not save a single elephant, rhinoceros or tiger. That is simply the starting point—the thing that wakes each of us up, to say, "We will not stand for this any longer." Although we cannot wave a magic wand, we want to be able to say to our grandchildren that we did everything we possibly could. At the moment, I do not think I could say that. I will let others judge whether they could, but I could not. That is why I wanted to speak in this debate.

I do not want the Government to get defensive about this, but they could do more simply by saying, "We are going to put a new shirt on, dust ourselves down, see what the laws are, bang the desk and demand that we get better action"—from ourselves, but also from the police and the international organisations that we belong to. If that happened, it would not stop these things overnight, but I bet it would start moving things along.

Can we not accelerate things a bit? Do we really want to come back here in a year, or two or three, and say, "There are still elephants being poached for their ivory"? That was the plea of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing Central and Acton and the hon. Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr). Whatever the difficulties, the consultation has finished. I accept that it will not be easy, given the exemptions that will have to be made; but for goodness' sake, we have been talking about an ivory ban for years. Can we not just get on with it somehow?

Other people know far more than I do about the laws and the difficulties—some will have had to go and witness them. I came here to say this to the Government. I know they want to do as much as they can, and they are doing so. That is true of us all. But let us not be the Parliament, or the Members, or the legislators who had to tell their grandchildren, "We're sorry that those great wild animals no longer exist. We wanted to do more, but it was difficult to get people to work together, and the exemptions were difficult." Whatever the challenges and difficulties, we owe it to our children and grandchildren, ourselves and the planet, to do better. That is the task before us.

Thursday

Perhaps appropriately on a snowy Thursday morning with people finding travel difficult all across the Country, the day began with [questions](#) to the Secretary of State for Transport.

Leveson Inquiry

Questions were followed by a [Statement](#) from the Government on the implementation of the Leveson Inquiry. Members were disappointed to hear the Government would not be extending the scope of the changes to press regulation.

[Chris Bryant \(Rhondda\) \(Lab\)](#): *Having spent many hours with the Dowler family, Christopher Jefferies and many others, may I say on behalf of all the victims that many of us will feel that the Secretary of State has shoved another little knife in our heart? In all honesty, we had hoped that the promises were real promises that we would get to the truth—not just the bits and pieces that were able to be dealt with, as Sir Brian said, but the elements that were expressly excluded from the original investigation, particularly the Metropolitan police’s collusion with the press, which could not be looked at at all.*



I find it inconceivable that the Secretary of State talks only about the freedom of the press—of course the freedom of the press is important—because to many of us, it is also important that politicians should be able to speak without fear or favour. That means we should no longer be cowed by press barons; we should be able to do what is right for society. I simply ask the Secretary of State why on earth, if everything he has said today is true, did the Government make all those promises in the past, and why did he vote for the legislation?

[The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport \(Matt Hancock\)](#): *The world has changed since 2011. The truth is that the rise of the internet means that some of the issues the hon. Gentleman rightly raises about making sure the debate we have is a reasonable one, not one based on abuse and bullying, are much broader. Tackling the problems of today is our task now. Of course there were abuses that were looked into during the inquiry, and they have been looked into by the police in three investigations, with over 40 criminal convictions since. The judgment we have to make is: what is the best thing to do for the future of this country, when the way in which we debate politics and make decisions is under challenge, because of new technology, in a way it has not been for decades if not centuries? Getting those solutions right is mission-critical to our future as a liberal democracy, and that is what we are putting our attention to.*

The Leader of the House then took to the Dispatch Box for [Business Questions](#).

After Business Questions, the Foreign Affairs Select Committee was called on to make a [statement](#) regarding the International Court of justice.

Backbench Business

Seasonal Migrant Workers

[Backbench Business](#) this week focused on the contributions to the UK economy of Migrant workers and the risks to the economy if controls placed on them are too tight.

[Pete Wishart \(Perth and North Perthshire\) \(SNP\)](#): *It is just possible that our farmers will get through this year because freedom of movement is still available and farms have access to eastern European migrants who hopefully will come and do the work. Next year is when it all kicks in, because freedom of movement will end and the available sources of labour will go with it. At that point we will need innovative solutions to bring in seasonal labour so that the crops can be picked.*

[Tom Brake \(Carshalton and Wallington\) \(LD\)](#): *I agree entirely, and there must be a sense of urgency about this. As I understand, however, yesterday the Government made a U-turn, and having said that March 2019 was the cut-off point for new arrivals, they will now allow people to continue to arrive during the transition period. If that is correct, that may help the industry for a further few years.*

The day in the Chamber ended with an Adjournment [Debate](#) on the Future of ATMs.