



## THIS WEEK IN PARLIAMENT 05 - 09 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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There were three major stand out issues that have been subject to intense discussions throughout this week. Firstly, was the inescapable matter of the future economic relationship between the UK and the EU. The EU Council President, Donald Tusk, and the European Parliament's [draft resolution](#) served as a staunch rebuttal to Theresa May's Brexit vision. Secondly, something I have received many emails on from concerned constituents, was the visit of the Saudi Crown Prince to the UK. Once again, arms exports to Saudi Arabia and the conflict in Yemen were both in the lime light. Increased trade with Saudi Arabia, particularly in the context of Brexit, was a hotly contested issue considering their poor human rights track record. Finally, on Thursday, we were able to celebrate International Women's Day which also coincided with World Kidney Day. As Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Kidney Group, I encouraged Members to join a social media campaign to raise awareness of kidney health particularly in women. Up and down the country kidney groups and charities were holding events to raise money and spread information about chronic kidney disease.

### Monday

#### Defence Questions

The Secretary of State for Defence was at the Dispatch Box to answer [Questions](#) to begin the week. I took the opportunity to question the Minister on the implications for innovation in the Defence Industry as a result of the Government's Brexit position.

***Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab):** What impact does the Minister see coming from his attempts to increase innovation in defence suppliers if the UK withdraws from REACH, the European regulation on the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals, and if the free movement of scientists and engineers is not part of the Brexit agreement? Certainly defence companies have expressed grave concerns to me about that.*

***The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Guto Bebb):** This Government want to continue the free movement of people with relevant skills. The MOD is already engaging with the REACH issue. As it happens, I will be meeting relevant companies tomorrow to discuss the matter. I fully understand the hon. Lady's concerns, but the MOD is on top of the issue and is looking at it closely. I am confident that we will have an agreement that will benefit both the United Kingdom and our European Union partners.*



### UK/EU Future Economic Partnership

With the release of the EU's position papers on the Brexit withdrawal agreement last week and the Prime Minister's speech last Friday. The Prime Minister was in the House to make a [Statement](#) to outline the Government's stated position for a future economic partnership.

With the Prime Minister finally admitting in her speech that there would be negative consequences to Brexit, Members were keen to push her further on such points.

*[Caroline Lucas \(Brighton, Pavilion\) \(Green\)](#): Since the Brexit that the Prime Minister has set out is nothing like the Brexit we were promised—no “exact same benefits”, and far from £350 million a week for the NHS, we have nurses actually leaving the NHS and fewer coming in—does she not think it will be right to give the people the right to have a say on the final deal?*

*[The Prime Minister \(Mrs Theresa May\)](#): We actually have more nurses working on wards in the NHS now than we did in 2010. The British people were given a vote by this Parliament on membership of the European Union, and we are delivering on their decision.*

The Government then made a further [Statement](#) on the National Planning and Policy Framework, before the First Reading of a Bill on River Authorities and Land Drainage.

The House then read for a second time the Data Protection [Bill](#). The day in the Chamber ended with an Adjournment [Debate](#) on the Liquidation of DMB Solutions.

### Work and Pensions Committee

Away from the Chamber, the Work and Pensions Committee held a session investigating the work of the Charity [Mobility](#). In the [session](#), Members were astonished to hear that, due to changes to the rules, 75,000 people had been forced to give up their mobility vehicles.

### Tuesday

[Questions](#) to the Secretary of State for Justice opened Tuesday's sitting of the House.

### Government Policy on Russia

Following the shocking poisoning of an ex-Russian spy and his daughter in the UK, allegedly on the orders of the Kremlin, an [Urgent Question](#) was asked about what the Government's response would be. I made the following contribution:

*[Mrs Madeleine Moon \(Bridgend\) \(Lab\)](#)*

*The Foreign Secretary is right to say that the current situation is not the same as it was during the cold war, but is it not time to have an open and honest dialogue with the British people about how Russia uses instability, uncertainty and violence across the continent as part of its hybrid warfare, which is not peace but not war? That is the situation we are in and that conversation needs to be had. Will the Foreign Secretary lead it?*

### Boris Johnson

*As the hon. Lady will know, the Prime Minister herself spoke in her Mansion House speech about this very matter and set out clearly her deep anxieties about how Russia is behaving. What we need to do is to concert international activity, sanction individuals who are part of Putin's regime and keep the international community focused on exactly the points that the hon. Lady makes. Believe me, there is growing support around the world for what she says.*



**Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is good of you to have accorded this urgent question.

*I welcome my right hon. Friend's tour of the world and of the various abuses from Russia that we are dealing with at the moment. Though it is, as he rightly says, too soon to point fingers at Moscow regarding what happened in Salisbury, it is quite clear that we are seeing a pattern in Russian behaviour. Indeed, BuzzFeed's Heidi Blake, a journalist who has been researching this subject intensively over a number of years, has come up with 14 deaths that she attributes to Russian elements, and there are others who have pointed this out.*

*Only today, Shashank Joshi, a researcher at the Royal United Services Institute, indicated that murder is a matter of public policy in Russia today. My right hon. Friend's ministerial colleague, the Minister for Europe and the Americas, was also absolutely right to criticise the murder of Boris Nemtsov only recently.*

*We are seeing a pattern of what the KGB would refer to as "demoralise, destabilise, bring to crisis and normalise", so does my right hon. Friend agree that Russia is now conducting a form of soft war against the west, that its use of so-called fake news—more often known as propaganda and information warfare—is part of that, and that this requires a whole-of-Government response, which his Department is best placed to lead?*

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson):** I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who is indeed correct that Russia is engaged in a host of malign activities that stretch from the abuse and murder of journalists to the mysterious assassination of politicians. I am glad that he mentioned Mr Nemtsov, as in December I was privileged to pay tribute to his memory at the site of his murder on a bridge in Moscow.

*It is clear that Russia is, I am afraid, in many respects now a malign and disruptive force, and the UK is in the lead across the world in trying to counteract that activity. I must say to the House that that is sometimes difficult, given the strong economic pressures that are exerted by Russia's hydrocarbons on other European economies, and we sometimes have difficulty in trying to get our points across, but we do get our points across. There has been no wavering on the sanctions regimes that has been imposed by European countries, and nor indeed will there be such wavering as long as the UK has a say in this.*

*A cross-Government review is an interesting idea that I will take away and consider. As my hon. Friend knows, the National Security Council has repeatedly looked at our relations with Russia, which are among the most difficult that we face in the world. I assure him that we will be looking at it again. We must be very careful in what we say because it is too early to prejudge the investigation, but if the suspicions on both sides of the House about the events in Salisbury prove to be well founded, we may well be forced to look again at our sanctions regime and at other measures that we may seek to put in place.*

### **Domestic Gas and Electricity (Tariff Cap) Bill**

The Second **Bill** which was put before the House was the Second Reading of the Domestic Gas and Electricity Bill. The Bill seeks to curb the excesses of energy companies and ensure that consumers are given a fair and reasonable price. With Members largely in agreement over the aim, the debate was focused on the details of the Bill.



**Caroline Flint (Don Valley) (Lab)**: Do the Government not already have powers, under section 26 of the Energy Act 2010, to introduce a price cap if one group of customers is treated less favourably than others by an energy supplier? Ofgem fears that if it used its powers, there would be a ruling against it and it would end up in the courts. Our purpose today, and my purpose in supporting the Bill, is to lay out once and for all the powers to introduce a price cap for people who are losing out.

**The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Greg Clark)**: It is true that Ofgem has said that it might be challenged in the courts. I do not think we should be afraid of testing arguments in the courts, and I would have preferred to see that happen. The statute that the right hon. Lady mentions would not enable the gap to be closed in a way that would allow competition to continue in the other part of the market—other Members have raised that matter. It would require a closing of the gap, but that could take place by means of the deletion of other tariffs, which is not what we want.

The day in the Chamber ended with an Adjournment **Debate** on the political situation in the Maldives.

### Wednesday

Wednesday's session began with **Questions** to the Secretary of State for Scotland.

### Prime Ministers Questions



As the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia was visiting the UK this week, **PMQs** inevitably turned to Saudi Arabia and the conflict in Yemen.

**Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab)**: A year on, the Government are still suppressing a report on the funding of extremism, which allegedly found evidence of Saudi funding going to terrorist groups here in the UK, thus threatening our security. When will that report come out?

A humanitarian disaster is now taking place in Yemen. Millions face starvation and 600,000 children have cholera because of the Saudi-led bombing campaign and the blockade—600,000 children with cholera is something that everyone in this House should take seriously. Germany has suspended arms sales to Saudi Arabia, but British arms sales have increased sharply and British military advisers are directing the war. It

cannot be right that the right hon. Lady's Government are colluding in what the United Nations says is evidence of war crimes. Will the Prime Minister use her meeting with the Crown Prince today to halt the arms supplies and demand an immediate ceasefire in Yemen?

**The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May)**: The right hon. Gentleman raised two questions. On the first point about the Home Office's internal review, the Government are committed to stamping out extremism in all its forms. When I was Home Secretary, I launched the counter-extremism strategy. My right hon. Friend the current Home Secretary has appointed our counter-extremism commissioner. The review gave us the best picture of how extremists operating in the UK sustain their activities and improved our understanding of that. Its most important finding was that, contrary to popular perception, Islamist extremists draw most of their financial support from domestic, rather than overseas, sources.

I understand that because of some of the personal content in the report, it has not been published. However, Privy Counsellors have been invited to go to the Home Office to read the report. That invitation was extended, I believe, to the shadow Home Secretary, so she and other Privy Council colleagues on the Labour Front Bench are free to go and read the report.

The second issue that the right hon. Gentleman raised was the humanitarian situation in Yemen. We are all concerned about the appalling humanitarian situation in Yemen and the effect that it is having on people, particularly

women and children. That is why the Government have increased our funding for Yemen. For 2017-18, we increased it to over £200 million. We are the third largest humanitarian donor to Yemen. We are delivering life-saving aid that will provide nutrition support for 1.7 million people and clean water for 1.2 million people.

I was pleased that when I went to Saudi Arabia in December I met the Crown Prince, and raised with him the need to open the port of Hodeidah to humanitarian and commercial supplies. I am pleased to say that Saudi Arabia then did just that. This vindicates the engagement that we have with Saudi Arabia and the ability to sit down with them. Their involvement in Yemen came at the request of the legitimate Government of Yemen. It is backed by the United Nations Security Council, and as such we support it. On the humanitarian issue, it is for all parties in the conflict to ensure that they allow humanitarian aid to get through to those who need it.

This exchange was followed by two Urgent Questions. The [first](#) was with regard to UK relations with Saudi Arabia. Then the Government addressed a [question](#) on the Leveson Inquiry.

The House then had the [First Reading](#) of a Bill on Local Health Scrutiny.

### Opposition Day

Two opposition day debates were held this week, both proposed by parties other than the two largest.

### European Union Citizenship

The first [debate](#) was proposed by Plaid Cymru concerning whether UK nationals could choose to retain the rights of EU Citizenship after Brexit.

[Christine Jardine \(Edinburgh West\) \(LD\)](#): I found that quote particularly moving, having found in my constituency and, indeed, my own family, young people who know nothing more than being part of the EU. We are taking their identity away from them and, indeed, from ourselves, because for 40 years we have known nothing else than being proud Europeans.

[Hywel Williams \(Arfon\) \(PC\)](#): That is exactly the point I intend to make.

Many young people told me after the referendum that the result had been a profound emotional shock, an assault on the very foundations of their personal identities as Europeans, one telling me that she had been in floods of tears. They told me how they regretted losing key practical rights—this is not just an emotional identity matter—such as the right to travel without hindrance within the EU and the unqualified right to work and to study in other European countries. Today the UK Government have an opportunity to heal some of these divisions—intergenerational divisions and divisions between all peoples of these islands, particularly, as we have heard, in Ireland.



### Armed Forces Covenant: Northern Ireland

The second [debate](#) was led by the DUP and focused on the application of the Armed Forces Covenant in Northern Ireland.

[Conor McGinn \(St Helens North\) \(Lab\)](#): I have been robust in this House in my defence of the Good Friday agreement, and very occasionally my interpretation of it is slightly different from that of my hon. Friends from Northern Ireland, but on this matter I am very clear: not only is there not a contradiction between the full implementation of the armed forces covenant in Northern Ireland and the Good Friday agreement, but the logical outworking of the spirit of the Good Friday agreement is that veterans, their families and serving personnel are looked after.

[Owen Smith \(Pontypridd\) \(Lab\)](#): Of course, and equality is central to the Good Friday agreement, which is why it is so

important that the armed forces covenant, which makes it clear that no armed forces personnel or their families should be in any way disadvantaged by virtue of their currently serving in, or having been in, the armed forces, must not in any way be out of keeping with the application of equalities legislation—section 75 in particular—which is absolutely critical to the underpinning of the Good Friday agreement. That is why I am so pleased to hear the Minister repeat the Government's view that they do not think there is any need to amend section 75 because they believe the two things are entirely reconcilable.

The day in the Chamber ended with an Adjournment [Debate](#) on HMRC staff in Dudley.

### Thursday

Thursday began with [Questions](#) to a variety of parties. First of all the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs was at the Dispatch Box, followed by the Public Accounts Commission and several Church Commissioners.

### Mental Health Services: Children and Young People



The Government then came to the Chamber to answer an [Urgent Question](#) on Mental Health Services. Members wanted to be assured that the Government was providing the support young people and children needed when it came to mental health.

[Fiona Bruce \(Conqleton\) \(Con\)](#): I commend the Government for promoting the Emotionally Healthy Schools project, which, in my constituency, is working well and engaging not just children who have challenges, but their families. Does the Minister agree that helping children with their mental health challenges needs to involve, wherever practical, their families, family relationships and inter-parental relationships, as recommended by the Early Intervention Foundation?

[The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health \(Steve Brine\)](#): As ever, my hon. Friend makes a point about families. I said that we are already rolling out mental health first aid training to every secondary school, which is of course important, and we are also committed to rolling out mental health awareness training to all primary schools by 2022, but to coin a phrase, it takes a village. This is about the state—of course, schools are part of that—but also the third sector, which has an important role to play. It is also absolutely about the love, support and Christian embrace of families.

This was then followed by a [Statement](#) from the Government on the recent incident in Salisbury.

### Vote 100 and International Women's Day

Thursday was International Women's Day and so a [debate](#) was held to highlight the progress which has been made in the 100 years since some women were given the vote, but also the numerous issues which still need to be addressed for gender equality.

[Dame Cheryl Gillan \(Chesham and Amersham\) \(Con\)](#): Probably all of us in the House were shocked when we heard the reports of sexual harassment and abuse in the aid sector. When we are looking at what happens to women internationally, it is important that we hold our charitable organisations' feet to the fire to tackle the abuse that has been reported. How does my right hon. Friend propose that we can ensure that those organisations will deal with the allegations of sexual exploitation in the aid sector?

[The Minister for Women and Equalities \(Amber Rudd\)](#): My right hon. Friend will have heard, as I did, the absolute conviction and determination of the Secretary of State for International Development to make sure that, as my right hon. Friend says, she holds the charitable sector's feet to the fire. It is wholly unacceptable that anybody going abroad for a charity should take advantage of vulnerable girls and women. I am confident in the activity of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in this area.

*The second area that I wish to discuss is money. A truly equal society is also one where women and men are equally economically empowered. Globally, women earn less than men, have fewer assets, and still do 60% to 80% of unpaid domestic work. One in 10 married women in developing countries are not consulted by their husbands on how their income is spent, and although in the UK we are enjoying record female employment, we are also grappling with a national gender pay gap of 18%. Therefore, although as women we might think we have equality in the workplace, our pay cheques tell a different story. That is why this Government have introduced world-leading legislation.*



## Visits in Bridgend

### Litchard Primary School Visit

If one thing sets me up for the day is a visit to one of my local schools to engage with the pupils and enjoy their enthusiasm and energy. We decided to do an impromptu debate parliamentary style and divided the pupils into government and opposition with the pupils choosing their Prime Minister and Deputy and the Leader of the Opposition and Deputy.

The pupils chose to debate whether footballers are paid too much money. Debate followed quickly with pupils bobbing up and down to eagerly attract the Speaker's attention to speak and put forward their argument for or against. When the division was called by the Speaker to vote it was an overwhelming majority voting that footballers are paid too much money.

I hope that participating in this parliamentary style debate the pupils will remember more about the role of a Member of Parliament and the many traditions of Parliament.



### St. Clare's School Visit

I also had the pleasure to speak to students at St. Clare's School in Porthcawl about Parliament and the role of Members of Parliament.

The students listened intently to my role in Parliament as an opposition MP. This ranged from my working week and about being a member of the Defence Select committee and a member of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. A Question & Answer session after raised some interesting questions from the students about the NHS, Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin and Brexit.

### Coity Brownies

The Coity Brownies are working towards a badge of celebration of some women getting the vote 100 years ago in 1918 and invited me to talk about the importance of women being able to vote.

I started with showing the Brownies my number of 264 and asking what they thought it meant. Surprisingly one Brownies thought it was my age! Which made me think perhaps I need to change the colour of my hair. However the number means that I am only the 264th woman to become a Member of Parliament in over a thousand years of parliamentarians. Although women make up 50% of the population we are still underrepresented in leadership roles at all levels in society.

To give the Brownies an idea of what happens in Parliament we undertook a parliamentary debate. Two Parties were created who then choose a Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition and their Deputies. The government party chose the subject for debate: that pupils could wear their ordinary clothes to school so long as they wore a school logo. The opposition proposed wearing ordinary clothes to school but with no school logo. Much bobbing up and down, speeches, laughter and debating to and fro resulted in the opposition winning the argument and defeating the government by 13 to 11.

The debate gave the Brownies an opportunity to experience the way Parliament works with Brown Owl playing the role of Madam Speaker and keeping order. The importance of setting out arguments for and against a proposed change before reaching a decision was examined. The aim was to help the Brownies see the importance of voting and hopefully understand the need for achieving more equality for women.



Amazing start to Friday in Mynydd Cynffig Primary School talking to Mrs Brice's pupils about the work they have been undertaking on the subject of Drones or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. I think I can say from the range of information the children shared and the questions they asked that our future is safe in their hands. This was a bright, thoughtful and innovative group of children who will be our future scientists, technology innovators, designers and security experts.

