



THIS WEEK IN PARLIAMENT 07 - 11 May 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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The week took on a backwards structure as Parliament did not sit on Monday, but the House was host to another sitting Friday.

The Government has been left reeling from the defeats the Lords have inflicted on it's Brexit Bill, but the Commons are yet to see the return of any of the related legislation to the House. As such this week gave Members a brief respite to concentrate on other important issues.

I had the pleasure to Chair two important meetings in my role as the Chair of Labour's back-bench Defence group. The first highlighting the need for a more comprehensive and long term approach to security strategy. The second was an in depth presentation on the security questions in the high north and Arctic and Britain's role and interests in this area.

As well as these meetings, I attend the launch of a new report on Parkinsons and Mental Health.

Tuesday

Secretary Of State For Health and Social Care

The week began with Health [Questions](#). Member's probed for answers on a range of issues from Mental Health to access to bursaries for the training of nurses. I use the opportunity to ask about the lack of desire for the setting up of new GP practices.



***Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab):** So many GP practices—no matter what salaries or what terms and conditions they offer—are reporting a reluctance by newly qualified GPs to go into GP practice. What will the Minister do about the hours of work—the time given to consult with constituents—to make it easier for people to see GP practice as a viable opportunity to serve their community?*

***The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Mr Jeremy Hunt):** I do very much agree with the hon. Lady, which is why we are working hard to recruit 5,000 extra GPs into general practice in England. I gently point out to her that the Royal College of General Practitioners says that, while we spend 9.2% of the NHS budget in England on general practice, it is only 7.3% in Wales.*

The Government then answered an [Urgent Question](#) on the Learning Disabilities Mortality Review and a further [Question](#) on G4S and Immigration Removal Centres.

The First Reading of a [Bill](#) on the Protection of Pollinators followed and then the Secure Tenancies (Victims of Domestic Abuse) passed its Third [Reading](#).

Nuclear Safeguards Bill

The [Bill](#) was back in the House to consider the amendments made to it in the Lords. Under consideration was how the UK would replace the structures of Euratom or look to retain its membership of that organisation if it could not be replaced.

[Layla Moran \(Oxford West and Abingdon\) \(LD\)](#): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that while some of the safeguards the Minister mentions might well work, it would be easier to stay in Euratom until such time as everything is concluded so that there is absolutely no way we would fall off any cliff edges? Does he agree that “may” is not good enough in this scenario?

[Dr Alan Whitehead \(Southampton, Test\) \(Lab\)](#): The hon. Lady makes the important point that to have the full protection of staying in Euratom would be the best thing to do, not just on nuclear safeguarding but on a range of other civil nuclear activities, until we are absolutely certain that we have ticked every box and ensured that we have alternatives that are as good as what we have under Euratom. That, very largely, is what Lords amendment 3 seeks to do. It seeks to ensure that there is recourse to the full covering arrangements of Euratom if those boxes have not been ticked.

After waiting until the very last moment to tell us that Lords amendment 3 is not needed and will be opposed, the Government have finally come up with an amendment in lieu of their own that suggests that perhaps a fall-back plan is needed after all. Its wording is, in many respects, very similar to Lords amend-

ment 3. It places the signing of these treaties as the essential element in securing the transition to a full nuclear safeguarding role without Euratom, and specifies, as amendment 3 does, what they are. That in itself is a considerable victory for those who counselled for this over a period of time, and is a substantial turnaround from the Government's previous position. But, at the last, the amendment falls short. It places the option to decide not on whether principal agreements have been signed—for that will be evident, or not, at the time of departure—but on what one might call an interim stage on a fall-back which provides for circumstances where, at the beginning of a period of 28 days prior to exit, agreements may not have been signed and completed, but will in the Secretary of State's opinion have been so signed before that 28-day period is up. In other words, there is a very abbreviated, but nevertheless significant, period during which the Secretary of State will decide whether treaties are going to be signed. That will, in effect, be putting off the relevant request to the European Council for an extension of the time during which Euratom provisions hold, because the Secretary of State thinks it is, after all, going to be all right. That is a far shorter period than under the original general provisions that the Secretary of State said he would try to organise and get right in time for exit from the EU, but we are still back to that assumption that it will be “all right on the night” with no complete plan B in place. I accept that the amendment in lieu proposed by the Government comes a very long way, and that it has taken a considerable amount of U-turning, if we want to call it that, to put in place these arrangements, but in reality it is not quite far enough.



The day in the Chamber ended with a [Motion](#) on Criminal Legal Aid and an [Adjournment Debate](#) on Homeopathy: Veterinary Medicine.

Defence Committee

In a private session this week the Committee discussed the treatment of locally employed civilian interpreters in Afghanistan and the cases where they have struggled to gain permission to come to the UK. The Committee also considered the Defence implication for the Department for Exiting the European Union's position paper.

Foreign Affairs Committee

The Committee took [evidence](#) in relation to the UK's participation in the world cup in Russia this year. The Committee's chief concern was in establishing the safety of UK Nationals wishing to travel to Russia for the Tournament.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): *But Russian fans last time engaged in some of the worst violence, bullying, deliberate antagonism and provocation of supporters from other nationalities—and on top of that, you have the after-effects of the events in Salisbury. It just seems inconceivable, unless you can persuade me otherwise, that all those guarantees will be bankable.*

Deputy Chief Constable Roberts, National Lead for Football Policing: *It is not a case of me persuading you. It is a case of me outlining that we recognise the threats and that we recognise the level of reassurance we can give to supporters. I am not going to give blank cheques about "everything will be fine". We recognise the dangers. We will engage as much as we possibly can with the Russian authorities, because we need to maintain the relationship if we are to have any opportunity to influence their understanding of how British supporters behave and how best to deal with them.*

We are acutely aware of the events in Marseille. One of my officers gave CPR to one of the injured England fans, so I am acutely aware of that. But even from that point of view, what we saw there was that at least the Russian law enforcement we worked with on the ground were really committed to trying to stop the disorder. We saw them act in a professional way and give information and advice, so even at that stage the authorities were seen on the ground to be trying to work with us to prevent disorder

Wednesday

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was at the Dispatch Box to answer members [Questions](#) to begin the day. After a quick exchange, the Prime Minister came to the House.

Prime Minister's Questions

Brexit was back on the agenda in this week's [PMQs](#). The widely reported rifts in the Cabinet over which Customs proposal the Government will attempt to negotiate, left the Prime Minister in a difficult position trying to explain to the House why there is still no decision.



Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): *Could the Prime Minister explain why she and her Cabinet wasted weeks working up proposals that the EU said were unworkable and that the Foreign Secretary described as "crazy"? Does she agree with her Business Secretary who apparently backs the "crazy" customs partnership proposal, but who made it clear that he did not back a technological alternative when he told the BBC that jobs would be at risk if we do not sort out a comprehensive customs deal?*

The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May): *What the Business Secretary said on Sunday was that it was absolutely right that we should be leaving the customs union. If the right hon. Gentleman wants to talk about jobs, I am happy to do so: half a million jobs lost under the last Labour Government; record employment rate under this Conservative Government.*

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Iran Nuclear Deal

Following the decision of President Trump to withdraw the US from the Iran Nuclear Deal, the Foreign Secretary came to the House to reaffirm the Government's commitment to the deal in a [Statement](#). This was despite some hostility from the Government benches.

[Sir Michael Fallon \(Sevenoaks\) \(Con\)](#): But is not the President right in his analysis of this rather flimsy agreement, which should never have been called comprehensive, in that it does not include missiles and that, far from constraining Iranian behaviour, it has enabled the regime to use its new financial freedom to interfere in Syria, in Iraq, and above all in Yemen, and to sponsor further Houthi attacks on our friends in Saudi Arabia?

[The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs \(Boris Johnson\)](#): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, but I do not recall him making those points when he was serving so well as Secretary of State for Defence when the deal was done, and I disagree with him. Of course the JCPOA has its limitations, as I have readily conceded, but its advantage is that it has at its heart the idea of preventing the Iranians from acquiring a nuclear weapon in exchange for limited economic benefits. I still think that that idea has validity, and the Iranians are still in compliance with that agreement, limited though it is.

European Union Withdrawal Agreement (Public Vote)

The House then held the [First Reading](#) of a Ten Minute Rule Bill entitled European Union Withdrawal Agreement (Public Vote). The Private Members Bill aims to;

[Gareth Thomas \(Harrow West\) \(Lab/Co-op\)](#):... provide that any Withdrawal Agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union shall not have effect without a vote by the electorate of the United Kingdom and Gibraltar to that effect; to make arrangements for the holding of such a public vote; and for connected purposes...

The Bill received enough support and will have its Second Reading on Friday 6th July.

Data Protection Bill

The [Third Reading](#) of the Data Protection Bill saw further heated discussion focused around the affects the new Law would have on the Press.

[Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg \(North East Somerset\) \(Con\)](#): The right hon. Gentleman mentions what David Cameron, Nick Clegg and he did. It seems to have escaped his attention that David Cameron is no longer Prime Minister, that Nick Clegg is no longer Deputy Prime Minister, and that two former MPs and one still-existing MP cannot bind their successors. A new Parliament has the right to consider these matters afresh, and that is what is rightly being done today after countless police investigations and prosecutions, many of which ended in acquittal.

[Edward Miliband \(Doncaster North\) \(Lab\)](#): I give way to the hon. Gentleman's constitutional knowledge, but I do not give way to him on morality—and this is a question of morality and of promises we made. Remember the furore about all these events? Remember how people looked at us? Remember how all of us—Labour Governments too—were too close to the press, and how we said we would learn lessons? I take my responsibility too. We should have acted earlier. All Governments should take responsibility. To break this promise would be contemptible.



The amendments made to the Bill were narrowly defeated by the Government by only 9 votes.

The day in the Chamber ended with a [Motion](#) on Education followed by an [Adjournment Debate](#) on Universal Credit and Terminal Illness.

Thursday

The day began with [Questions](#) to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport followed immediately by the Attorney General.

Private Members' Bills: Money Resolutions

This was followed by an [Urgent Question](#) on Private Members' Bills: Money Resolutions. Many across the House are unhappy in the way in which the Government has treated the scheduling of Private Members' Bills. What have been construed as delaying tactics and a refusal to engage was even labelled by some Members as an affront to democracy.

[Sir Christopher Chope \(Christchurch\) \(Con\)](#): I have to say I agree absolutely with the points made by the hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Afzal Khan). I think the Government's behaviour is undemocratic and certainly is in breach of the undertakings they gave to the Procedure Committee, which were that, if a Bill got a Second Reading, as night follows day, it would then get a money resolution and the Government would not abuse their power as they are seeking to do now.

[The Leader of the House of Commons \(Andrea Leadsom\)](#): I point out to my hon. Friend that a number of private Members' Bill are going through and a significant number have had a Second Reading. Those are awaiting Committee. They include the Parliamentary Constituencies (Amendment) Bill, the Health and Social Care (National Data Guardian) Bill, the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation and Liability for Housing Standards) Bill, the Stalking Protection Bill, the Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths (Registration Etc.) Bill, the Parking (Code of Practice) Bill, the Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill, the Overseas Electors Bill, the Refugees (Family Reunion) (No. 2) Bill and others. It is very important that the Government use their good offices to bring forward money resolutions on a case-by-case basis in line with the long-held constitutional principle that it is for the Government to bring forward money resolutions.

Business Of the House

Business [questions](#) this week gave me the perfect opportunity to raise the issue of mental health care for people with Parkinsons. The inadequacies of which have been highlighted by a recent report.



[Mrs Madeleine Moon \(Bridgend\) \(Lab\)](#): Some 50% of people diagnosed with Parkinson's will go on to suffer from depression, anxiety and hallucinations. Yesterday, the all-party group on Parkinson's, which I chair along with Baroness Gale, and Parkinson's UK published a report, "Mental health matters too". One fifth of people with Parkinson's will not gain access to mental health services. Can we have a statement from the Government on how they intend to ensure that people with Parkinson's have an equal right to mental health support?

[The Leader of the House of Commons \(Andrea Leadsom\)](#): The hon. Lady raises an incredibly important point. There is an increasing awareness that many long-term conditions have mental health problems associated with them. The Government are committed to achieving greater parity of esteem between physical and mental health and are putting significant new funding into expanding mental health services. I encourage her to seek a further debate so that she can raise this particular issue directly with Ministers

In a [Statement](#) to the House, the Attorney General apologised to Mr Abdul Hakim Belhaj and his wife, Mrs Fatima Boudchar, and announced the settlement of a case against the UK Government over the abduction and imprisonment of the couple in Libya.

Mental Health: Failing a Generation

The Health and Social Care and Education Committee made a joint [Statement](#) to the House referring to the report the Committee has recently published on the Governments Green Paper on Mental Health and Young People.

Mr William Wragg (Hazel Grove) (Con): *I thank the hon. Lady for presenting the report on behalf of the two Committees, where it was a pleasure to join her as a member. Notwithstanding the concerns that have rightly been highlighted, I very much view the report as a piece of work to influence the Government's future policy making. Noting paragraph 36 on the damaging effects of social media on young people, what work does she think it might be necessary to undertake on this in future?*

Luciana Berger (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): *That was indeed a key part of our report. We had a mixed bag of evidence on social media. We heard from young people and from representatives of the Children's and Young People's Mental Health Coalition about this very specific issue. They told us about the opportunities for social media to provide peer support for young people, but also about the many challenges within social media. We said in our recommendation that we look forward to the forthcoming report from the chief medical officer on the impact of technology on children's health. That will be very important for us to consider in future plans.*

The Science and Technology Committee is also conducting an inquiry, and its report will be key. We look forward to the outcome of the work by the working group on social media and digital sector companies that is being conducted in a partnership between the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. All those pieces of work are incredibly important. As I said, we recommended that teaching on social media should be included in the compulsory PSHE curriculum that we want to be introduced in all schools. That will equip the next generation with the tools to contend with navigating the technological landscape.



Backbench Business

Backbench Business this week featured two debates. The **first** focused on Banking Misconduct and the FCA. The **second** of these debates looked at the issue of Libyan-sponsored IRA Terrorism.

The day in the Chamber ended with an **Adjournment Debate** on Crossrail Extension to Ebbsfleet.

Friday

This lopsided week ended with a Sitting Friday. Despite several Private Members Bills on the order the time available only allowed for two to be debated.

Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill

The Third Reading of this **Bill** passed its final hurdle in the House. The main focus of debate was on an amendment that would extend the rights enshrined in the Bill to the main carers of the child even if they were not the parent.

Antoinette Sandbach (Eddisbury) (Con): *There was a degree of shock among the members of the Bill Committee at the evidence of employers who were not prepared to give employees leave if they were pregnant and then lost their child. I and many other Members were horrified by the lack of compassion and understanding being demonstrated by some people towards their employees at a deeply personally distressing time. I welcome my hon. Friend's amendments that address the issue, which is an important reason for why we are being forced to legislate in this area.*

Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con): *My hon. Friend is right. The vast majority of employers will be considerate and understanding and will look to support their employees. At the end of the day, they will generate a lot of loyalty in an employee that might well be repaid in a positive way at a later date. It is not a burden for an employer to be good to their employees. Reducing staff turnover can actually be a huge boost for a business. Employees can get experience and develop skills and will stay if they feel that the situation is more of a partnership than a "them and us" relationship.*



Unfortunately, however, there is still an undoubted need to legislate. The majority of people would not discriminate against others based on their gender, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, but there are some who would, which is why we have the law and the relevant sanctions in place.

Representation of the People (Young People's Enfranchisement) Bill

The [Bill](#) aiming to lower the Voting Age to 16 was back in the House this week for its Second Reading.

[Karen Lee \(Lincoln\) \(Lab\)](#): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker; I am a new Member.

As is often the case, the turnout in the recent local elections was abysmally low. Does my hon. Friend agree that if younger people could vote, turnout might improve and the result might be more representative of what the general population thinks about issues?

[Peter Kyle \(Hove\) \(Lab\)](#): My hon. Friend makes an important point, and if we had longer for this debate we would air such issues in more detail.

The Scottish experience in its referendum was that the proportion of 16 and 17-year-olds who voted was 20% greater than the turnout among 18, 19 and 20-year-olds. That shows that young people of 16 and 17 are enthusiastic, and when they get into the habit of voting and have the opportunity to do so, they grasp it with both hands.

The Bill was once again talked out by the Government, a point raised with the Deputy Speaker by unhappy Members.

[David Linden \(Glasgow East\) \(SNP\)](#): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. A number of Members have, unusually, come to the House on a Friday because they wish to vote in favour of this Bill, which the Government have blocked today by means of filibustering. [Hon. Members: "No!"]

[Madam Deputy Speaker \(Mrs Eleanor Laing\)](#): Order.

[David Linden \(Glasgow East\) \(SNP\)](#): What methods are available to hon. Members to change the procedures of this House to allow us to have a vote and allow votes at 16 to become law, as is the will of the people?

[Madam Deputy Speaker \(Mrs Eleanor Laing\)](#): I understand the hon. Gentleman's point of order. The first part of it alleges negligence on the part of the Chair, so I cannot allow that to stand. No filibustering has taken place in this House today, because if such a thing had occurred, I would have stopped it. It is the case that we had one Bill that went through two stages and it took a long time to do that. Therefore, this Bill has had only half an hour's consideration. That is perfectly proper under the rules of the House. His question about changing the procedures is a very good one that has merit, although I of course express no opinion as far as that is concerned. I suggest that he, and any other Members who feel as he does, should consult the Chairman of the Procedure Committee, who might wish to consider the points that he has made.

The Day in the Chamber ended with an [Adjournment Debate](#) on Helen and Douglas House Hospice.