

Dear Colleague,

NPF Document – Crime, Justice, Citizenship and Equalities

We are writing about the above and in particular the section relating to House of Lords Reform. An amendment will be proposed by Margaret Wall and Khalid Mahmood. The text of the amendment is overleaf. We also list just of some of the Members of Parliament who support the amendment.

Briefly, a joint meeting of Labour Lords and MPs have been discussing this for some time and are concerned that the Party may make a commitment that either cannot be delivered or, if enacted, will fundamentally change our system of government for the worse.

To paint ourselves into a corner and promise to replace the present Lords with a second elected chamber of Parliament will put us on course for parliamentary gridlock in the short and the long term. A fourth term Labour government's whole programme would be jeopardised by the parliamentary process that would be necessary to enact such a fundamental change. And, once made, we would end up with a Parliament divided between an elected Commons and an elected second chamber claiming equal legitimacy.

It is easy to fall for the knee-jerk reaction and say a chamber of Parliament must be 'accountable' and therefore 'elected'. However, it is accountability from which the 'Commons' draws its strength and why the second chamber must bow to its will in the end. An 'accountable' second chamber would also draw strength from elections and could claim equal legitimacy. Indeed, were it to be elected by PR – a serious option in Jack Straw's White Paper – its members could claim greater legitimacy than any MP who did not receive more than 50% of the vote in the general election. What hope for the primacy of the Commons then?

We suspect that the proposal in the document before you is almost entirely 'top-down' and believe that it is vital that the Party has the flexibility to develop sensible reforms that will make the second chamber more representative without threatening the primacy of the Commons. **The reform of the Lords Labour has started needs to continue** but the party needs to begin to 'think out of the box' on this issue and we believe the amendment presents that opportunity.

No doubt you will be told that votes in the Commons last year confirmed that MPs want elections. We would respectfully point out that **those votes were carried by Tory and Lib Dem MPs and that there is no majority in the PLP for elections** as we show overleaf. *In any case, since when was Labour Party Policy made by MPs in a free vote in the Commons? And how can Jack Straw announce in the Commons what will be in Labour's next manifesto before you – the NPF – have even discussed it?*

Please support the amendment.

Kind regards

David Clelland MP

Jean Corston (Baroness Corston)

Proposed Amendment to Partnership in Power (Draft Final Year Document)
Crime, Justice, Citizenship and Equalities

Page 4, line 5

After “accountable to” insert “and representative of”

Page 4, line 6

Delete “substantially or wholly elected second chamber” and insert “second chamber fully representative of the regions and nations of the UK with a proper balance of gender and ethnicity and wider areas of experience”.

Amended paragraph reads,

Labour believes that Parliament should stand at the apex of British democracy. But to do so Parliament must be properly accountable to, and representative of, the British people. For this reason we will develop reforms for a second chamber fully representative of the regions and nations of the United Kingdom with a proper balance of gender and ethnicity and wider areas of experience and will explore how the existing powers of the chamber should apply to the reformed chamber.

House of Lords Reform - Votes in the Commons Wednesday 7th March 2007
How the PLP Voted

<u>Division 69. 80% elected 20% appointed</u>	<u>PLP vote</u>	<u>Total vote</u>
Ayes	159	305
Noes	164	267
 <u>Division 70. 100% elected *</u>		
Ayes	212	337
Noes	97	224

* 61 Labour MPs - including many of those listed below - who oppose elections and voted against 80% elected and for a non-elected House, voted tactically for 100% elected to spoil the victory of division 69 above - Tory and Liberal Democrat policy at the time. This tactical vote prevented 80% elected being the only option to be carried and giving the green light to opposition policy.

Had 80% elected not carried there would have been no need for tactical voting and the PLP vote would then have been:-

Ayes	151 (212-61)
Noes	158 (97+61)

It is perfectly clear that at least 158 Labour MPs oppose elections. Therefore there is no majority in the PLP for elections to the second chamber. The argument put forward that the votes in the Commons somehow legitimise the policy now being pursued for an elected, or partly elected, second chamber is spurious and based entirely on the votes of the Tories and the Liberal Democrats – a strange way to make Labour Party policy.

Supported by:

Commons:- David Clelland, John Prescott, David Blunkett, Sir Gerald Kaufman, Dennis Skinner, Tony Lloyd, Margaret Beckett, Stephen Byers, Richard Caborn, Keith Hill, Chris Mullin, Bill Oler, Janet Anderson, Clive Betts, Sir Stuart Bell, John McFall, Clive Efford, Tom Levitt, John Spellar, Brian Donohoe, Mike Hall, Bob Laxton, Kahlid Mahmood, John Hepple, Ben Chapman, Frank Cook, Terry Rooney, Andrew Miller, Sion Simon, Jim Dowd, Stephen Hepburn, George Howarth, Ian Lucas, Don Touhig, Keith Vaz, Jimmy Hood, Brian Jenkins, Dari Taylor, Nick Ainger, Martyn Jones, Kali Mountford, Alan Keen, Ann Coffey, Mike Gapes, Rosemary McKenna, Betty Williams, Linda Gilroy, Ronnie Campbell, David Hamilton, Helen Jones, Kevan Jones, Jim Cunningham, George Mudie, Jim Sheridan, Alun Michael, Ken Purchase, Barry Sheerman, Joan Humble, Rosie Cooper,

Lords:- Jean Corston, Robin Corbett, Dennis Turner, David Lea, John Evans, Tom Pendry, Jimmy Gordon, Richard Faulkner, Brian MacKenzie, David Lipsey, Margaret Wall, Hector McKenzie, Anne Gibson, Alan Howarth, Llyn Golding, Brian Haworth, Garfield Davies, Peter Snape, Keith Brookman, Tony Christopher, John Tomlinson, Derek Foster, Donald Anderson, Barry Jones, Terry Thomas, John Morris, Keith Bradley, Lyndon Harrison, Mary Goudie, David Clark, Liz Symons, Patricia Hollis, Geoffrey Lofthouse