



HOUSE OF LORDS

Library Note

Maiden Speeches

This House of Lords Library Note provides the text of selected recent maiden speeches to illustrate the range of styles and subjects covered by new Members in their first contribution in the Chamber.

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I. Introduction

The initial speech made by a Member of the House of Lords is known as a maiden speech and is by tradition an occasion marked with respect by the House. Until a new Member has made their maiden speech they may not table oral questions or questions for short debate, but may table questions for written answer.

A maiden speech can take place at any time after a Member has been introduced, taken the oath and signed the register. They must also have signed an undertaking to abide by the [House of Lords Code of Conduct](#).

It is usual for a Member making a maiden speech not to be interrupted and to be congratulated by the next speaker, on behalf of the whole House. During a maiden speech, and the following speaker's congratulations, it is expected that Members will remain seated and not enter or leave the Chamber.

In order for the House to apply these conventions, a Member wishing to make their maiden speech is expected to do so in a debate with a speakers list. The speech itself is expected to be short (less than 10 minutes) and uncontroversial, not expressing views that would provoke an interruption.

This Library Note includes the full text of a selection of recent maiden speeches made by a cross-section of Members from different parties and affiliations.

The procedures relating to maiden speeches are set out in the *Companion to the Standing Orders and Guide to the Proceedings of the House of Lords* (2013 edition)—sections [4.48–4.50](#).

2. Lord Touhig, 8 July 2010, Debate on Housing

My Lords, little did I think when I rose to speak for the first time in the other place—it was the annual St David's Day debate—that I would have to go through a second parliamentary initiation and make another maiden speech, this time in your Lordships' House. I have much appreciated the warmth of the welcome and the help and advice that I have received from noble Lords on all sides of the House—not least from my supporters, my noble friends Lady Ramsay and Lord Jones. More than that, the advice, courtesy, assistance and above all patience shown to me by all the staff I have encountered since I took my seat here a week ago have been exemplary.

I have come here from the other place having spent 15 years representing the people of Islwyn, and I owe the people of my former constituency a great debt for placing their confidence in me to represent them in Parliament over that period. Like many noble Lords, I owe a great debt to my family for their support and encouragement over 35 years of public life—not least to my long-suffering wife. It is often said that behind every successful man is a good woman. I lay no claim to any success of any kind, but if the term were to be applied to me I am sure that it would be, “Behind this successful man was a very surprised mother-in-law”.

I pay tribute to my noble friend Lady Ford for securing this debate; we are considering an important matter. The Conservative–Lib Dem Government will face many challenges in the coming months, especially over the level of public spending. Many people will, rightly, make special cases to protect their various budget heads from cuts. I hope that when the

Government work out the fine detail, they will not lose sight of the fact that a very basic need of every citizen is a home—a roof over their head, and an affordable one at that.

When I was asked about the territorial title I wished to take, I of course chose Islwyn, my former parliamentary constituency, but I also chose Glansychan, which is a dozen houses in the village of Abersychan. Abersychan has produced five Members of Parliament and is where I was born. If your Lordships will indulge me in giving this potted history of the place of my birth, I will show that it has relevance to this debate. My parents rented No. 7 Glansychan in the 1930s for seven shillings and sixpence a week. That was an affordable rent even for a couple living on a collier's wage in the south Wales mining valleys. But while my parents' affordable home was quite common in the 1930s, affordable homes are far less common today.

A recent survey by Shelter Cymru showed that 50 per cent of adults in Wales struggle to pay their mortgage or rent at some time. In Wales, 91,000 people are looking for a home, yet we have 26,000 empty properties. Why? Almost one in four of the 1,100 people surveyed said that the cost of housing was a severe source of family anxiety. More than half those surveyed said that their adult children could not afford a decent home of their own. I note that the Halifax building society has said that the average age of a first-time buyer today is 34. When my wife and I bought our first house, we were both 20. I am not suggesting that this is the only factor causing people to make their decisions in that way. There are many reasons why people are not setting up their homes until they are perhaps in their mid-30s, but affordability is a major factor.

The Shelter Cymru survey shows that about one in four have had to reduce what they spend on food in order to keep a roof over the heads of themselves and their family. Shelter England commissioned a YouGov survey, which revealed that 2.8 million people aged between 18 and 44 admitted that they are delaying starting a family because of the lack of affordable housing.

Some 2.9 million people aged between 18 and 34 live with their parents. Of this cohort, almost 60 per cent say that that situation makes it difficult to develop and maintain other relationships. In these difficult times when people are looking for work and have perhaps been urged to move elsewhere to look for work, the Shelter survey tells us that 5.6 million people say that housing costs affect their ability to move to find alternative work. Of those renting a property, 50 per cent did not believe that they would ever be able to afford to buy a property in their local area. If we look closely at the private rented sector, we see some of the worst housing conditions of all, and that needs to change.

I am always wary of calling for more regulation, but I believe that a case has been made for greater regulation of the private rented sector. We also perhaps need regulation of the private lettings sector. At the weekend, I came across a case of a young student who had paid £240 to a lettings agency that had not introduced him to any landlords or told him about any rented property. He now does not know what he will get for his £240.

The incident causes me some reflection. Some years ago I was involved in a campaign that supported miners in getting compensation for illnesses that they had as a result of working underground, and I pay tribute to the former Labour Government for all that they did in that respect. However, the scheme was blighted by claims farmers who persuaded often elderly and vulnerable miners or their widows to sign up, hand over a non-refundable registration fee and agree to pay the claims farmers a part of any compensation that they received to offset medical and legal costs. The Government met all legal and medical costs in those cases. The claims farmers were operating a scam. Frankly, they were parasites feeding on the most vulnerable in our society. I am not suggesting that a similar situation exists in the letting agency sector, but

will the Minister indicate in her response the Government's view on regulation? If she cannot do that, perhaps she will write to me and put a copy in the Library.

I have said enough about the problem, so I turn to the solution. We have to build more homes, of course, especially more homes for rent. The Town and Country Planning Association says that we need perhaps 280,000 new homes a year, but such a building programme will need to be funded, and in these difficult financial times we need to think outside the box and look for new and innovative solutions. I therefore commend to the Government the new foundation model proposed by the Co-operative Party—and here I declare an interest as a member of that party. The new foundation model provides an ethical, low-risk investment for investors; it gives access to and control of housing to the citizen; and for our society it offers easy to build, environmentally friendly housing that remains affordable. This model separates the cost of land from the purchase price by placing the land in a community land trust. Unlike individual home owners, residents accumulate equity shares in a mutual home ownership scheme. If they move on, they can sell their shares, and that money may then help them to put down the deposit on a house in the open market. I commend the idea to the Minister. I am sure that she is not the sort of Minister who will dismiss it simply because the Government did not think of it first.

The great socialist James Maxton once said that poverty is manmade and therefore open to change. The lack of affordable housing is a manmade problem and is open to change if we have the will to do something about it.

(HL *Hansard*, cols [402–5](#))

3. Lord Kennedy of Southwark, 21 July 2010, Debate on Women in Society

My Lords, I speak for the first time in this noble House with some nervousness and trepidation, although I have been helped and reassured by the warm welcome that I have received from noble Lords on all sides of the House. In my first few days here, I have felt like a new boy at big school in a huge building in which I keep getting lost. Everyone around me seems to know how to get on with their job and where to go, while I am struggling to read the map that I was given and to find the Printed Paper Office. However, I have had wonderful support, advice, guidance and help from the officers and staff of this noble House. Nothing has been too much trouble for them and no question too trivial, no matter how many times I have asked it. I also thank my two sponsors, who introduced me to the House—my noble friends Lady Gould and Lady McDonagh. I was delighted that they did me the great honour of introducing me. They have both, at different times, been my boss in the Labour Party. It was my noble friend Lady Gould who first employed me at the Labour Party 20 years ago.

I was delighted that I was able to get agreement that my title would be Lord Kennedy of Southwark. It is the borough where I lived from the age of two, where I went to school and where I went on to be elected as the youngest member of Southwark Council in 1986. It is an historic borough with a rich and vibrant history. I also thank the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, for putting down the Motion for debate today.

In 1971, 56 per cent of women were employed. In the past 30 years, the figure has risen to 69 per cent, with the numbers of men and women at work being almost equal. However, men and women follow very different career paths. Almost half of all working women work part time and almost a quarter of women in work do admin or secretarial work, while men are more

likely to be managers and senior officers or to work in skilled trades. For example, only 31 per cent of managers are women, yet women make up nearly half the workforce. Female managers are also more likely to be childless than male managers. A key reason for this is that women still carry a disproportionate amount of the burden in the home, looking after children, managing the household and maintaining social networks. Women who work often choose jobs that offer flexibility—for example, in care work, hospitality and retail.

With a significant number of women combining their working life with the responsibilities of being a mother or grandmother providing childcare support, it is no surprise that maternity and parental rights are the number one concern. Enormous progress has been made, including the introduction of paid paternity and adoption leave, the extension of paid maternity leave and the introduction and extension of the right to request flexible working to carers and parents of children up to the age of 16. Flexible-working opportunities benefit everyone—employers, employees and their families—with many employers now recognising that it makes good business sense to provide flexible-working opportunities for their staff. We must not forget that our economic recovery depends on women being able to make a significant contribution as active members of the workforce and that working mums need access to rights and support to enable them to combine their working and family lives.

Despite women's increased participation in the labour market over recent years, they are still more likely than men to be low paid. Women are far more likely to work part time than men, with women making up over three-quarters of all part-time employees. As around two-thirds of jobs paid at the minimum wage are part time, this leads to a higher chance of women being low paid compared with men. Take the example of retail where, out of nearly 3 million people employed in the sector, 40 per cent of women work part time and yet only 17 per cent of part-time employees are male. Retail is one of the largest low-paying occupations, where the introduction of a minimum wage has made a significant difference, as millions of low-paid women workers rely on the national minimum wage to help them to maintain a decent standard of living. The Government must do all that they can to ensure that low-paid workers continue to benefit from this protection.

An additional challenge faced by women workers is often their journey to and from work. Women travel at different times from men. They are more likely to travel off peak, either early in the morning or late at night. Women are far more likely than men to use public transport. Even today, twice as many men as women hold a valid UK driving licence. Women are also far more likely than men to travel shorter distances. Where there is a family car available, men tend on the whole to be the ones who use it. Evidence clearly shows that women feel less safe and more at risk of violence and aggression than men. Of the 6 billion journeys made on public transport each year, the overwhelming majority are safe, but that does not prevent women from feeling vulnerable when using public transport. Women factor issues of personal safety into everyday decision-making in a way that men tend not to do. It is clear that safety while travelling is an issue that concerns many women, particularly low-paid workers.

I wish the coalition Government well in dealing with the issues that I have highlighted today and the many other issues that they have to tackle in the years ahead. I again thank all Members, officers and staff of this noble House for the warm, friendly and helpful way in which I have been welcomed during these past few weeks.

(HL *Hansard*, cols [1017–9](#))

4. Baroness Sherlock, 5 October 2010, Debate on the Charitable Sector

My Lords, I thank the Minister for introducing this debate and for tempting so many of us to make our maiden speeches. He obviously chose well.

It is a particular and unexpected pleasure to find myself among the speakers today. Like so many other new Peers, I have been touched by the kindness of so many noble Lords and by the dedication and professionalism of the staff who have been helping me to navigate my way, both literally and metaphorically, around this rather wonderful if slightly complicated institution. Particular thanks are due to the policeman who, when he had seen me pass him several times in one day, leant over whenever I passed and said gently, “Lost or not lost, my lady?”. The answer, sadly, was normally, “Lost”.

I am also profoundly grateful to my supporters, my noble friends Lady Hollis and Lady Prosser, for their kindness and wisdom, and to my mentor, my noble friend Lady Pitkeathley, who with a sureness of touch is leading me gently through a thorough apprenticeship that I am sure would impress even my noble friend Lord Sugar. These three Peers illustrate the range of civil society that we have been talking about today. Between them, they have an inspiring track record in our universities, charities and trade unions, all part of civil society.

I, too, have spent most of my working life in civil society, although to rather more modest effect. I had the privilege of leading a number of voluntary organisations, including the National Council for One Parent Families, now Gingerbread, and the British Refugee Council, once ably led by my noble friend Lord Dubs. It was suggested when it was announced that I was coming to this House that someone with a background in single parents and refugees might not be welcomed to the heart of the British establishment, but of course I knew that that was wrong. I was able to say that for years I had been amazed at the amount of help that I had received from all sides of this House, and that when I went to Members of this House and could make a case, with evidence, of an injustice, a need or a policy that simply was not working, those Members would need no persuasion to speak out, even when those affected were deeply unpopular—as in their time, I have to confess, both single parents and refugees have tended to be.

That role of speaking out, or enabling the voices of those who are not often heard to be heard by Parliament and by the nation, seems to be one of the most important roles that charities have. I am sure that other noble Lords will address the question of charities delivering or supplementing public services, but I want also to talk about their role in amplifying the voice of those communities. That seems to be central to the idea of “civil society”.

I was a member of the Carnegie Commission of Inquiry, which looked at the future of civil society. As these inquiries are wont to do, we spent quite a bit of time debating what in fact civil society was. We already have as many definitions as we have the number of charities that have been cited in the debate, but we settled on something informed by Michael Edwards: that there are three dimensions of civil society.

First, we all want to live in the “good society”, as the Minister mentioned. Secondly, civil society is the way in which we achieve that good society, by coming together in a variety of voluntary associations for our benefit. Reading any list of those associations, from sports groups to churches and mosques, from women’s institutes to single-issue campaigns, gives you a picture, a sort of mosaic, of life in Britain today in all its beauty, diversity and complexity. Sometimes a list

like that might show up what might seem improbable links between communities. A case in point might be the emergence of broad-based community organising—for example, groups like London Citizens which bring together schools and colleges, churches and mosques and charities, all taking action for the common good.

Thirdly, civil society is a framework. It is the means by which a whole range of voices, from all strands of our society, can speak into the public square. The particular role of charities in that configuration is an interesting one. Of course, there are plenty of civil society organisations that are not charities—political parties and trade unions spring to mind—but they are very much part of civil society, despite not being charities. So what is the distinctive role of charities? When I talk to people, I find that there is often a temptation to assume that practical action, or delivering public benefits solely by practical action, is the particular preserve of charities. Many noble Lords can attest to the scale and the depth of the practical action being undertaken by the wonderful charities in our country, but the very delivery of that practical action can produce some valuable learning.

I spent three years in the Treasury, advising Ministers on a range of issues, mostly to do with families with children—interesting times—and poverty, and the voluntary sector. One of the things I learnt there was that wise Ministers, then and now, talk to charities before they make decisions about the groups that they will affect. The reason is because of their expertise but also because those Ministers recognise that charities are closer to the ground and understand the impact of likely decisions on the communities they represent. That closeness to the ground means that many charities see things that others do not or long before the rest of us are even aware that they are there. With that knowledge comes responsibility, and many charities have a role to play in holding up a mirror to our society or shining a light into some of the darker corners. But that can be very risky for them. Everybody agrees that charity is a good thing when it is helping the deserving poor, but that support can evaporate quite quickly, as can donations, when the charity starts to challenge the status quo. It can be risky. Sometimes even government—the reassurances of the noble Baroness, Lady Bottomley, notwithstanding—whether local or national, can be prone to a touch of displeasure when the charities they fund start to bite the hands that feed and fight back. I understand that: it is a practice whose charms are more readily apparent when one is in opposition than when one is in government.

If a charity finds evidence of serious injustice or desperate need or systemic failure, and society seems not to know that or not to attend to it, surely the charity must speak out. I hope that the Lords spiritual will forgive my intruding on their territory by citing a cleric, albeit a Roman Catholic one. The late Brazilian archbishop, Dom Camara, famously said:

“When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a Communist”.

It is our responsibility to indicate our willingness to hear what charities have to say. If we do not agree, that is fine—we can debate it with them. But it is vital that they are neither censored nor self-censoring. In a climate of public spending cuts of the kind that are coming, it will be much harder for charities to maintain the courage, not to mention the capacity, to speak out, to be critical, to help those who have power to see and hear the things they may not wish to see and hear.

I would be very interested in hearing what the Minister and others feel they can do to encourage charities to maintain that role of speaking out as well as simply serving others. If they lose that dimension of their role, we will all be the poorer.

(HL *Hansard*, cols [46–9](#))

5. Lord Boswell of Aynho, 27 October 2010, Debate on Higher Education Funding

My Lords, as the pattern of introductions to this House and subsequent maiden speeches has unfolded since the summer, two things have emerged that I have identified and very much welcomed. First, there is our genuine gratitude for the welcome we have received here from all parts of the House. If I may say so, for those coming from another place there is a strong personal preference for its lack of tribalism. There is also the very strong support and advice we have had from all members of the staff at all levels. Secondly, there is a theme which is perhaps appropriate for the difficult times for our economy and our country: a sense of obligation arising from the honour we now enjoy to those of our citizens in need of help or encouragement in difficult times.

Looking further ahead, I now feel that it is not just the passing of the years in my own case which makes me want to look forward beyond my own children's generation to that of our grandchildren as well. This is highly relevant to tonight's debate on the excellent report of the independent review led by the noble Lord, Lord Browne, because I firmly believe that our universities—not just the household names which have established themselves over the years, generations and centuries—remain one of this country's glories. We know that their reputation is high in international terms; that has been done on relatively limited resources. At the same time, over the two generations which have now passed since the Robbins report, we have effected a rather British kind of painless but radical change from elite student involvement to popular involvement, and exposed many young people and adults, too—they are often forgotten—to the social and educational benefits of higher education, as well as its income and instrumental benefits, without destroying the quality of the system. More did not mean worse, though it did mean different and more diversified.

At this point, I should properly declare an interest as vice-chair of the governors of the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, which of course gives me an exposure to a different funding council. Perhaps I might mention in passing on the report that there are some rough edges in the proposed changes in connection with institutions in the devolved Administrations; I leave that now. I also declare an interest as a recently co-opted governor of the University of Northampton, although on that we greatly look forward to my noble friend Lady Falkner's contribution because she is chancellor of that university. Both of those are post-1992 universities. I have another good reason for remembering that particular year, as in its dying days—after the Act had already passed through into law—I was privileged to be asked to serve as higher education Minister.

My later experiences as a governor convinced me that the complexity of the sector makes it wholly unsuited for centralised control. Fortunately, the self-restraint of successive Ministers of differing parties has at least broadly maintained the concept of autonomy, on which indeed the success of the sector has been founded. However, it strikes me that the constraints and developing policy problems of that time, almost 20 years ago, are still very much alive. I used to call that some kind of bizarre, sequential slow-bicycle operation, punctuated by occasional

official reports led by Members of this noble House—the winner being the Minister who stayed upright the longest, without falling off and occasionally changing policy.

We still need, as we did then, to balance student numbers and aspirations against Exchequer cost both for tuition and for maintenance; to reconcile quality and unit cost; to secure access and social justice; to balance the vocational with the quite non-vocational; to tune research and teaching activities; and, of course, to lever in external funding wherever practicable. The Browne review exposes that, in our present arrangements, something has to give, and if it is not to be—and I do not wish it to be—either quality or student numbers, then those students who are participating must be prepared to contribute in due course out of their future earnings streams, and they will increasingly feature as consumers of the system. I therefore welcome and endorse the strategic approach of the review. It will, however, need very close attention to the detailed impact on all the multiple types of students, and, of course, on institutional stability itself.

I am particularly glad that we are beginning indirectly to unpick the traditional and increasingly costly straitjacket of the full-time student award which has applied all the way back to my own undergraduate days and has led to a kind of two-tier system, regulated and unregulated, with part-timers, until now, excluded from support. However, we need to ensure—I am sure the Minister will have regard to this—that all students of ability and their families need not feel deterred by the weight or threat of future debts. I believe that we can secure this on the broad basis of the review's proposals.

On wider university funding issues, the current spending review is, of course, even more directly relevant. At this stage I simply put down a marker for the broad area of humanities and the social sciences as well as the physical sciences, as by definition universities need to have at least a spread of competence and excellence.

We have generally, so far, done well by students and their universities. We have expanded the system without compromising it. We recognise, as the review does, the compelling constraints of today's economic situation, but we need not despair, and it is our duty to find a way through them.

(HL *Hansard*, cols [1244–6](#))

6. Baroness Hollins, 2 December 2010, Debate on Human Rights

My Lords, it is a privilege to be able to address your Lordships on the subject of human rights, and I am grateful to my noble friend Lord Alton for initiating this very timely debate. But first I would like to thank everyone, especially the staff, who have been so welcoming and so patient in showing me the ropes, making my first weeks in this House such a positive experience. With this marvellous support, and the collective expertise of noble Lords, I anticipate a stimulating and enjoyable membership of this House.

Today I will share my concerns about the rights of people of all ages who live with learning disabilities, previously known perhaps as mental handicap: people who are seen as different, and whose humanity is often not recognised. I know that many Members of this House, including my noble friend Lord Rix, became powerful advocates for people with learning disabilities because of their own family experience. I am grateful to them for the leadership and the inspiration that they have shown.

Much of my life's work has been informed by family experience. I grew up in Yorkshire watching my father cope with the consequences of war injuries, injuries which eventually caused his death 50 years after D-day. And while this experience set me on a medical career, it is the experience of my son's learning disability which has inspired me to try to make a difference in the lives of people with learning disabilities.

My family experience has had a strong influence on my clinical work, my research and my teaching at St George's University of London, where for more than 30 years we have been trying to ensure that, at least in the practice of medicine, people with learning disabilities receive appropriate and equal treatment.

I know that my concerns are shared by many parliamentarians, as shown powerfully in the 2008 report on learning disabilities, *A Life Like Any Other?*, published by the Joint Committee on Human Rights. This report painted a shocking picture of the denial of fundamental human rights to adults living with learning disabilities in the United Kingdom.

I have just returned from Romania, where, as chair of the steering group, I was invited to introduce the Bucharest declaration and action plan at a WHO Europe high-level conference. The declaration is called *Better Health, Better Lives*, and is about improving the health and well-being of children with learning disabilities and their families. It was co-signed by the regional director of WHO, the regional director of UNICEF and the Romanian Minister of Health on behalf of Ministers of Health from across the WHO region, which comprises 53 countries. The iconic image, which will remain with all of the participants, is of six people with learning disabilities standing and waving the easy-read illustrated version of the declaration after their own presentation to the conference and saying, "We want things to change now".

In many ways, this declaration was an unlikely occurrence. Noble Lords will have heard about the terrible conditions in which thousands of abandoned babies, disabled children and young people live. Noble Lords may also have seen pictures of children being kept in caged beds, in buildings which are little more than warehouses for abandoned children. Media attention in recent years has focused particularly on Romania, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, but these countries are not the only ones that are failing children.

There is still poor practice in many parts of our region. As many as a third of a million disabled children and young people still experience discrimination, neglect and abuse in institutions in Europe as well as in other countries throughout the world. Most disabled children, young people and their families are poor, with little formal support being provided for them. Negative attitudes and stereotypes are the norm, and they experience barriers in gaining access to healthcare. These are human rights issues.

The first priority of the Bucharest declaration—to protect children from harm and abuse—recommends that legislation should be reviewed to ensure that it meets human rights standards, especially those set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations convention on the rights of disabled persons, both of which this Parliament has ratified. I do not have time today, nor would it be appropriate in a maiden speech, to share the other priorities or the detailed action plan which accompanies the declaration, but these are available on the WHO website.

I am pleased to report that our Government were represented at the Bucharest conference by Dr Roger Banks, a senior psychiatrist working in learning disability services. The UK's progress in planning for and meeting the needs of these children and their families offers some important

lessons for elsewhere in Europe. Take, for example, the 2001 English White Paper, *Valuing People*, about the needs of people with learning disabilities, and the independent inquiry, of which I was a member, that the Secretary of State set up at the instigation of MENCAP, to examine whether and why people with learning disabilities are discriminated against in our hospitals. Two important monitoring projects have also been established: a confidential inquiry into avoidable deaths and a learning disabilities observatory to collect monitoring data.

I am encouraged that the noble Lord, Lord Howell of Guildford, has convened an advisory group on human rights challenges to inform his work at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I sincerely hope that this group will have regard to the human rights abuses affecting disabled children and young people in many parts of the world. I should like to ask him to convene a round table to discuss how expertise in this country can best be used to improve the human rights of children and young people with intellectual disabilities internationally.

I conclude my comments with the following aphorism. If we can get it right for people with learning disabilities, we can get it right for other citizens. I hope noble Lords will join me in promoting policy that makes a real difference in people's lives, by putting disabled people at the centre of the human rights debate. Thank you.

(HL *Hansard*, cols [1592–4](#))

7. Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield, 3 December 2010, Debate on the House of Lords Reform Bill [HL] (Lord Steel of Aikwood)

My Lords, it is a pleasure and an honour to join your Lordships' House. It is a pleasure because of the immense kindness already shown to me in abundance by all who legislate and work here, and it is an honour to be able to work here with so many of your Lordships whom I have greatly admired, first, as a journalist writing about government and, later, as an outside observer of the British constitution from my academic home in the school of history at Queen Mary, University of London.

I have long had a fascination for the hidden wiring and the moving parts of our constitution, and now I find myself a small new particle of a very big and significant part of the British constitution—your Lordships' House. The fascination began almost 44 years ago on an autumn evening in the library of St John's College, Cambridge, where I spent my undergraduate years. What triggered it? My first reading of Walter Bagehot's 1867 classic, *The English Constitution*, a magnificent work, brimming with brio and insight into this most ethereal of governing phenomena. Finding the British constitution has been, in one professional guise or another, an elusive quest for me ever since that evening in Cambridge—a fascination, I have to confess, that has not always been fully understood by less than empathetic colleagues and friends, who tend to see in it a dash of the young trainspotter that I was in the glorious days of steam.

In the context of today's debate, it is intriguing and, I think, useful to plunder Bagehot's chapter on the House of Lords, even though it was written in the mid-19th century, and I shall come to that in a moment. On the theme of utility, it is sometimes only in long historical perspectives that we can discern the retrospective work of your Lordships' House. For example, it turned out to be the perfect receptacle when our country mercifully shed its habit of executing those it had come to regard as failed politicians. I made this point a couple of weeks ago to the noble Lord, Lord Robertson of Port Ellen, when we were companions on a journey returning from the University of Aberystwyth. We partly filled the long slog home across mid-Wales by

contemplating the value of your Lordships' House and what might await in future. The noble Lord responded to my historical depiction of the House of Lords as an alternative to execution, and I have his kind permission to relay our conversation, by saying that he had made a similar point to the Russians while on a visit in his capacity as Secretary-General of NATO a decade or so after the Cold War had ended. He told his hosts that what communist Russia had lacked was a House of Lords of its own into which it could have decanted the likes of Leonid Brezhnev. "If you had possessed such an institution," the noble Lord told the Russians, "you might still have a Soviet Union".

Back to the real thing, though: your Lordships' House. In 1867, Bagehot saw it as a Chamber of,

"temporary rejectors and palpable alterers",

of draft legislation. It was imperative, he wrote, that the House should contain a "class of respected revisers". He regretted that Lord Palmerston's proposal for the appointment of life Peers had been rejected, and warned that without such an infusion of persons with professional knowledge and experience, the House of Lords could find itself in peril. He wrote:

"Its danger is not in assassination, but atrophy; not abolition, but decline".

It took another 91 years before Bagehot's prescription was fulfilled with the passage of the Life Peerages Act 1958, almost certainly the most transforming incremental reform of your Lordships' House in its long history, with a powerful and cumulative effect that has made it what it is today—Bagehot's House of respected revisers. That, in my judgment, is the crucial test to be applied to any of the new configurations of your Lordships' House that may be proposed: could the Members of a reformed Chamber still be seen as respected revisers?

I was once in favour of an elected Chamber—a British senate of 100 legislators, elected on the basis of proportional representation by huge constituencies that embraced city, town and countryside, with one-third up for election or re-election every five years. I have changed my mind; indeed, it would have been improper to have applied for appointment to the Cross Benches of your Lordships' House if I had not. There are two chief reasons why I have changed my mind. First, there is the high and continuing utility of having a group of people somewhere in the legislative process who are sensitive to politics and government but are not themselves partisan in a party-political sense. Secondly, in most trades, crafts, professions and walks of life, we are ever keener to widen the confluence of backgrounds, knowledge and experience when recruiting. In my judgment, appointment rather than election will remain the best and primary instrument for achieving this if it is a goal that we share.

Quite apart from election, which would create the danger of a replica Chamber that, by its very existence, would promptly inspire a tussle in terms of relative power with the other place, it is very difficult to imagine that elections would sustain the flow of experience and knowledge that the appointments system provides for your Lordships' House, especially regarding those with a background in science and technology, business and industry. To rise in the other place, you need first to make your way there in your 30s or early 40s. With the best will in the world, that is usually too soon and too young to have acquired fully professional depth in the laboratory or the boardroom.

I know that undue controversy has no place in a maiden speech, and horizon-scanning is a perilous craft. I hope, however, that your Lordships will allow me a concluding thought on the Bill before us. Once we have seen a debate on the coalition Government's proposals on reform

of your Lordships' House and they contain, as we expect, a dominant element of election in them, if the two Houses of Parliament find that they cannot reach a consensus on a new DNA for the revising Chamber, and if in the approaching twilight of their term the coalition Government are unwilling to reach for the Parliament Act, we have in the House of Lords Reform Bill in the name of the noble Lord, Lord Steel of Aikwood, a rational, valuable and relatively readily implementable alternative for worthwhile improvement that cuts with the grain of past changes—a means, in short, of effecting organic reforms as an alternative surgery.

Much of the British constitution remains unwritten, though a good deal of it, since I first read Bagehot in 1966, has moved from the back of an envelope to the front of a code and then to the face of an Act of Parliament. I have in mind particularly the Civil Service element in the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010. Yet much remains as magical and mysterious as when Bagehot picked up his pen to describe what he saw.

Constitutional statutes, when they are drafted and brought forward, are, in effect, the Companies Acts of the British way of government. They are often what Bagehot called the “latent part of legislation”, laden with unanticipated implications for other parts of the British constitution and dripping with the possibility of unintended consequences. Their scrutiny calls for the most special care.

(*HL Hansard*, cols [1706–9](#))

8. Lord Palmer of Childs Hill, 27 January 2011, Debate on Tourism

My Lords, I thank the noble Viscount, Lord Younger of Leckie, for initiating this debate. I also thank the many noble Lords and officers and staff of the House who have befriended me since my introduction and made my first weeks in this illustrious House far less unnerving than they might have been. I thank particularly my two sponsors, my noble friends Lord Dholakia and Lord Carlile, for all their help and encouragement.

Nevertheless, it is with some trepidation—your Lordships can hear this from all the maiden speakers today—that I stand to speak before you today for my maiden speech. Could it be that Oscar Wilde was wrong when he said that politicians address all subjects with an open mouth? Even more difficult is the requirement to be uncontroversial—particularly for me—but I will do my best to be both uncontroversial and to the point.

When I stood as a Liberal candidate in school elections way back in the dark ages—it was a long time ago—I had no idea that I would one day be addressing this august body. My family background is a cocktail of nationalities. My late mother was Polish, and in the context of today being national Holocaust Memorial Day, I remember her mother and sister, my grandmother and aunt, who stayed in Poland and were never heard of again at the end of the Second World War. Today, we remember all those, not only in that Holocaust but everywhere else, who were not so lucky as my mother and sadly perished in those dreadful times.

My father also came from far away—Newcastle. My Uncle Isaac was killed in service in the Middlesex Regiment in the First World War, while my father served in the British Army in the Second World War.

By profession, I am a chartered accountant and spent my professional life as a partner and senior partner in firms of London-based chartered accountants. As an adult with a young family—I thank my wife Susette and my children for their wonderful support—I wanted to play

my part in making my London borough a good place to live and work. As a borough councillor for the best part of 25 years, both in government and in opposition, that has been my aim.

As a councillor, one of my concerns was that of promoting the London Borough of Barnet. However, my interest in urban tourism was generated by chance. I was invited by a senior politician to hear a speech that he would be making at the English Tourist Board. As I had at that time no practical interest in tourism, he had to persuade me that I would enjoy his speech and, incidentally, the copious food and drink that would follow. He was right. As I walked, somewhat erratically, down Lower Regent Street following the event, I started to think about what I described as urban tourism. I realised that my borough, Barnet, like many towns and cities, had much to offer visitors. Lots of famous personalities lived or worked there—for example, Amy Johnson—and there were many places of real interest, one being the exceptional Royal Air Force Museum at Colindale, which has fascinating displays including a hands-on section for children.

Then there is the green belt surrounding Barnet with its rural parks and open spaces. We have heard about rural England from other speakers. Consulting with Barnet's local studies historian and archivist, I ascertained that there were many notable people and places of pilgrimage in our borough. William Wilberforce—he of the abolition of slavery—prayed at St Paul's church, while his friend Sir Stamford Raffles has a tomb at St Mary's Hendon. For those interested in church monuments, there are monumental brasses to be rubbed, notably at Finchley and Hadley. I am very grateful to the right reverend Prelate for talking about the place that churches can play both in religion and in tourism. We are also in close proximity to the great estate of Kenwood, with its historic house and grounds.

I am sure that Barnet is not alone in having more to offer tourists than at first meets the eye. This situation probably applies to many towns and boroughs throughout Britain, which, if they look, will find sights and facilities to promote tourism. I was shocked when I was a council cabinet member I found find that managers of local hotels had little idea of the wealth of interest in the local area. However, once apprised of the possibilities, they were interested in taking them up.

In these difficult times, more conferences will be held outside central London, and our urban conurbations need to develop positive facilities for these and to promote places of interest for the non-attending partners of delegates.

What about the bikes for hire in London? Surely there is scope for rides through the Royal Parks, or guided bicycle tours of London's historic centre. More people are getting on their bikes, even without the prompt of the noble Lord, Lord Tebbit, and this should be encouraged as an environmentally sound way of exploring our country for citizens and visitors alike.

I have concentrated on London, but the same rationale can be applied to many places in Britain. For example, my children were at university in Manchester, which is another example of a large town with an industrial background where many visitors interested in industrial history, manufacturing and the growth of urban life will find sites of interest.

With the rise in the use of the internet and mobile phone apps, particularly among the young, promoting one's area on these media is essential for successful tourism. My plea is that tourism is not only for the headline—catching events, but these certainly have their place. We are starting a decade of major international sporting events hosted across Britain, with the Olympic Games. Our travel, hospitality and tourism industries have a wonderful opportunity to boost

tourism, show the country's great attractions and increase and enhance Britain's popularity and reputation as a five-star tourist destination. We need to encourage everyone to enjoy seeing as much of our country as possible and to travel widely throughout our urban and rural landscapes, across the great diversity of interest and enjoyment that our country can provide.

Government can help. The noble Lord, Lord Gardiner of Kimble, referred to a speech on tourism last year by the Prime Minister, David Cameron. I shall quote from that, because there was not a lot of quote in what the noble Lord said. The Prime Minister said that,

“the current business rates system ... fails to support the development of tourism. If a local council does more to attract tourists to its area they know they'll be picking up costs but they'll get none of the additional business rate revenue. Central government sucks in 100 per cent of this revenue generated by all local economic growth. This is just mad”.

We are known as a country with a temperate climate—and reference has been made to our weather in this debate. It is interesting, at least. Our countryside ranges from pleasant to magnificent, but we should not forget our towns and suburbs, both ancient and modern, with much to offer the tourist. We had a lot of statistics from the noble Viscount, but I shall quote just one. Cultural tourism is Britain's fifth largest industry, our third largest export earner and worth about £115 billion a year. This is good, but it could be made even better and more versatile, and I welcome this debate.

In conclusion, I thank you all for your kindness in this my first—some would say unusual—week in your Lordships' House, and I hope to contribute to the civilised debate, for which this House is famous, for many useful years to come.

(HL *Hansard*, cols [1127–9](#))

9. Baroness Stowell of Beeston, 3 February 2011, Debate on Children: Parenting for Success in School

My Lords, I start my maiden speech by thanking your Lordships for the warmest of welcomes since my arrival three weeks ago. This is without doubt one of the friendliest places that I have ever joined, but arranging sleepovers is taking the friendly thing a bit too far.

I also take this opportunity publicly to thank my close friends, my noble friends Lord Coe and Lord Hill of Oareford, the Minister, whose support made my introduction to this House all the more special. Talking of special leads me naturally to remark on the impressive professionalism of all staff working in this House—and I really mean all staff. Not only do I thank them for their support and guidance, I wish to record my great respect for them and for what they do.

I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Northbourne, on securing this debate. Before I make my contribution, I will say a little about my background and to explain why I have chosen this debate to make my maiden speech. There is much academic discussion—and rightly so—about what is termed social mobility, but I am here today because I am fortunate enough to have benefited from it. I was born and brought up in Beeston, a small town just outside Nottingham, from where I am now proud to take my title. I joined the Civil Service in 1986 and, during my time, worked in the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall, the British Embassy in Washington and the Downing Street press office. I had a brief spell in the private sector before returning to

politics to run William Hague's office when he was leader of the Opposition. Until the summer of last year, I enjoyed nine busy years at the BBC, and I am now an independent communications consultant. As this is a debate about children, I must declare that the NSPCC is a client.

That is me, but I have omitted two things which are relevant to our discussion today. First, I did not attend university, probably because my comprehensive education was unremarkable. Secondly, the reason that I have none the less achieved considerable success professionally is, I believe, the parenting that I received from my mother and father, a factory worker and a painter and decorator, who encouraged us to be independent, confident and, above else, to seize opportunities that would allow us to succeed.

I share that with your Lordships because, like all new Members of this House, I am frequently asked what is my area of expertise. I am not an expert, but I want to focus my work in this House on how we can encourage ambition and create opportunities for people to succeed, especially those who come from backgrounds similar to mine. To use the policy shorthand, my area of interest is social mobility.

My recent reading has therefore included the report, which has already been referred to, by the right honourable Member for Birkenhead about what he calls the foundation years. Because of my experience, I should not have been surprised, but I was none the less heartened to read in the report not only that parents and families are the most important factor in determining a child's life chances but that their wealth and academic ability are not more important than their aspirations for their children, if those aspirations are maintained. That is the rub. The report shows that parents, particularly those from poorer backgrounds, start with high aspirations but end up with low expectations of what their children will achieve. Parents from backgrounds similar to mine are not aspiring for their children as they get older because they cannot see enough opportunities and because they do not know how their children can achieve success. In my view, addressing that disparity is our biggest challenge and should be one of our priorities. I am pleased that the Prime Minister has already made it so.

I could go on, but, in summary, I believe that we need to champion ambition everywhere and create a range of routes to success that are straightforward, even though they require commitment and hard work. We must not allow our ambition for more working-class children to attend Oxbridge to distract us from helping all young people to be ambitious in whatever they decide to do. To that end, I very much welcome the new generation of university technical colleges and the studio schools which are starting to emerge.

I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in today's debate, and I look forward to future occasions, when I hope to contribute further.

HL *Hansard*, cols [1482–3](#))

10. Baroness Bakewell, 3 February 2011, Debate on Arts Funding

My Lords, it is with great pride that I rise to give my maiden speech in this House on a subject that has played a sustained and sustaining role throughout my own life. However, I first wish to thank noble Lords from all sides of the House who have given me such a warm welcome and to acknowledge the help that I continue to receive from the outstanding staff who work here. It is with pleasure that I thank my two distinguished sponsors, the noble Baroness, Lady Kennedy of The Shaws, and the noble Lord, Lord Puttnam.

I understand that I must first declare an interest. I am chair of the touring theatre company Shared Experience. I was for six years the arts correspondent of BBC television and for six years the chair of the National Campaign for the Arts. I have served on, among others, the council of the Aldeburgh Festival, the board of the National Theatre, the BFI, the council of Friends of the Tate and the Film Council.

It sounds, perhaps, as though I was to the manner born—that this came as some sort of birthright—but it is not so. My grandfather, an iron turner in a Salford factory, died at the age of 33 and my father was sent to Chetham's Hospital, then an orphanage for poor boys in Manchester and now a world-famous music school. Chetham's had, and still has, one of the finest 17th-century libraries in the country. My father grew up loving books. The importance of libraries in the life of a child should not be underestimated. He left school at 13 to work in a foundry and enjoyed a career in engineering. My mother, the daughter of a cooper in a Manchester brewery, also left school at 13. Many years into their marriage they made up for the lost years by studying at the Workers' Educational Association. I am the child of their aspirations. I grew up in the 40s and 50s, enjoying a grammar school and university education without fees and without debt. My life is a testament to social mobility. My arrival in this House is surely its crowning glory.

This, then, is the life that has turned to the arts to understand the world about me. From reading that encompassed *Jane Eyre* and Mrs Gaskell's novels about industrial Lancashire, visits to Manchester City Art Gallery and concerts by the Hallé Orchestra, I have continued to find nourishment in the sensitivities of those who create and perform works of art. I believe profoundly that the arts are more than the entertainment that awaits us at the end of the working day—a light relief from the real business of living. I believe the arts to be a core essential in shaping and sustaining our human values. So it is not surprising that I am passionate that the rewards should be available to everyone in our society.

Let me speak particularly about how public funding of the arts outreach programmes touches ordinary lives. Not long ago, I opened an art exhibition at the QUAD arts centre in Derby. The exhibition was called *Objects of Delight* and was curated by 14 people between the ages of 55 and 75, who were given total freedom to select their own show, with works of art freely lent from the Arts Council's wonderful collection. The show was full of surprises. It included art by Hockney, Ken Kiff, Gillian Ayres and Grayson Perry. The ferment of the curator's excitement spread throughout Derby, with friends and family catching the mood. This one modest venture was, for those involved, transformational.

It is important to stress that the central purpose of arts funding is to encourage the artistic spirit; that is its absolute undertaking. Art is not a form of social work but, if the enjoyment of art is to be confined to those who can easily afford high prices, public money is not being responsibly spent. Outreach features in the budgets of all our major companies. The Tate currently works with 70 children in Orkney creating art. The sums of money involved are relatively small, but they are important. They are less likely to attract sponsorship or media attention, but they change lives—76 per cent of adults engaged in the arts in the past year. This is why I commend the matter of the debate today and urge your Lordships not only to enjoy the arts to the full but to endorse a funding strategy that gives all our citizens access to and participation in work that can be uplifting and life changing.

(HL Hansard, cols [1512–3](#))

11. Lord Grade of Yarmouth, 4 March 2011, Debate on the Live Music Bill

My Lords, that late and much loved comedian Harry Worth may not have been in the top flight of the 20th century's great philosophers and thinkers, but he had some sage advice for anyone foolish or brave enough to speak in public. Harry said with great insight, "Never worry if the audience walks out during your performance—the time to worry is when they walk towards you". Well, thanks to one of the many great traditions of this House, there are Doorkeepers deployed throughout this Chamber to deter your Lordships from walking in any direction while I offer these maiden words. That is a great relief to me, if less of a comfort to your Lordships.

It is customary to thank all those who work in this House for making new Peers—and I am no exception—so very welcome and I do so wholeheartedly now, but with one small caveat. Those who patrol the doors and corridors of your Lordships' House to such great effect have brought me, quite late in life, to a stark self-realisation: I have absolutely no sense of direction whatever. Each time I step out of one Room or other in this great Palace, the nearest staff member is quick to anticipate the glazed look in my eyes and tactfully steps in to save me from my fourth fruitless lap of the Chamber. So I have more reason than most to be grateful for their support and direction. As Blanche DuBois might have said in one of the greatest curtain lines ever written for the stage at the end of "A Streetcar Named Desire", I have always put my trust in the kindness of strangers.

Still on a personal note, I would like to be allowed to record how proud I feel to be following in the footsteps of my two late and noble uncles, Lords Grade and Delfont. They gave me so much to live up to, not just by their achievements in the entertainment industry but, more importantly, the immaculate reputations and the good will they engendered throughout their careers. Along with my late father Leslie, these three remarkable brothers really taught me everything I know. Unfortunately, they did not teach me everything they knew, so I am still working for a living.

And so to the Bill under debate this morning. Let me state from the outset that I speak in full support of my noble friend and erstwhile colleague Lord Clement-Jones in his legislative quest to repair the unforeseen damage that the Licensing Act 2003 has caused. There is overwhelming support for the proposed reform of this Act, since it threatens musical life in our nations at its most fragile point—grass-roots level.

No doubt in the case of the 2003 Act, the road to these unintended consequences was paved with good intentions, with or without musical accompaniment along the way. I can certainly understand the need to give the authorities the necessary powers to curtail public nuisance and noise disturbance caused by unruly and unlicensed events of scale. No one wants a Glastonbury-style rock festival to explode on the local allotments but in the event the Act contains such wide powers that, as we have heard today, it threatens to criminalise even small groups of unlicensed music lovers huddled together in a public place, giving pleasure to but a handful of innocent lovers of live music. In the iPod and headphone world that we inhabit today, surely we should be doing everything to encourage and promote live music.

I have had a long career nurturing and spotting talent. If I know anything—I hasten to say that this is not a question I should like to see the House divide on—it is that fledgling talent needs somewhere—anywhere—to find an audience. Stars have been spotted as buskers, bus drivers, at amateur talent contests, village halls, pubs and social clubs—anywhere where they might find

an audience to help them practise their talent and hone their skills. Rightly, we are proud in these islands of our great musical tradition, whether your Lordships' taste is for Gilbert and Sullivan or Gilbert O'Sullivan, The Beatles or Benjamin Britten, Sir Simon Rattle or the Singing Postman of blessed memory. They all had to start somewhere. I am certain that wherever they did start, they were not burdened with the redundant bureaucracy of filling out forms to apply for a licence for a harmless pursuit.

Under the current Act, without a licence, you can tune up and get banged up. I admit that there are some purveyors of alleged modern music that I would happily see locked up—preferably in a sound-proof cell. But, as your Lordships especially understand, hard cases make bad law. The 2003 Licensing Act is bad law. It is beyond the credible to argue that the legislators' intention was actually to stifle the small pleasure of sharing live music with a small audience in any public space.

I hope that one or two of your Lordships may recall, with me, that the age of rock and roll was spawned by what became known as the skiffle era—Lonnie Donegan, and all that. Tea chests, a broom handle and a line of string made a double bass, and Mum's old washboard and thimbles sufficed for percussion. That DIY musical movement liberated generations of kids who found that they could make their own music at virtually no cost. All they needed was an audience. It spawned a great British musical tradition and movement which put Britain in the forefront of live popular musical culture—a tradition that continues today.

In those days, no one had to care if halls and rooms above the coffee bars were licensed or not. From this amateur beginning, Britain gave the world the Stones, the Beatles, the Who and a whole hall of fame of music industry legends. As they set out on their roads to world fame, they performed anywhere they could find a public room and a few people—no licence required but a licence to inspire.

I ask your Lordships to consider how many of those legends who have brought such benefits to Great Britain plc would have had these opportunities had the 2003 Licensing Act been in force in those days. This Bill does not offer a simplistic anything—goes antidote to the 2003 Act. It does not propose going from the heavily prescriptive requirements of the Act to a free-for-all. My noble friend Lord Clement-Jones has presented a Bill that contains some very well thought through protections and checks that offer real powers to the authorities where there is unacceptable abuse. These, I believe, are more appropriate and better fit the original intentions of the 2003 Act. I support these reforms wholeheartedly.

In conclusion, I offer my grateful thanks to your Lordships for your patient attention and for resisting the urge to walk in any direction. One last question: when I exit the Chamber for the Peers' Dining Room, do I turn left or right?

(HL *Hansard*, cols [1317–9](#))

12. Baroness Randerson, 4 March 2011, Debate on the Live Music Bill

My Lords, I must begin by thanking your Lordships for the warmth of the welcome that I have received here. I wish in particular to thank my sponsors, the noble Baronesses, Lady Walmsley and Lady Finlay of Llandaff, both of whom have provided me with valuable advice. I also thank the staff of this House, who have been unfailingly helpful and have, quite literally, steered me in the right direction on many occasions—indeed, I think that my fitness has improved since I came here because of my needless laps of the Building and fruitless climbing of the wrong stairs.

I speak in this debate with a mixture of emotions: pride, humility and considerable trepidation. I am one of a growing number of Members of your Lordships' House who have been Members of the devolved Assemblies and Parliaments. In my case, I remain a Member of the National Assembly for Wales, but only for the next four weeks.

It has been a great honour to represent my constituency of Cardiff Central for the past 12 years. Cardiff is a beautiful city with a strong and distinctive culture. Of course, there have been, and are, several Members of your Lordships' House from Cardiff. However, I believe that I am the first Liberal or Liberal Democrat Peer from Cardiff since DA Thomas, who was briefly MP for Cardiff in 1910 and became Baron-later Viscount-Rhonda in 1916. He survived the sinking of the "Lusitania", so I hope that I have survival skills here.

I am, of course, a member of a political party, the Liberal Democrats, which until recently was in opposition for many years. I believe that it was my noble friend Lord Ashdown who once said about those years in opposition, "The first 60 years are the worst". However, we have in the mean time been part of coalition Governments in Scotland and Wales. Indeed, I was honoured to be the Welsh Minister for Culture from 2000 to 2003, and it is that experience that I shall draw on in today's debate.

As an historian by training, I am more than a little intimidated by the history and traditions of your Lordships' House. In contrast, in the Welsh Assembly, we have literally been creating our own history during the past 12 years. Speaking on the day when the votes on the referendum on further powers for that Assembly are being counted, I hope that there will be the opportunity to create even more tradition there.

Noble Lords will be pleased to hear that one of the disciplines that I learnt in the Welsh Assembly was that of brevity, so I shall proceed rapidly to the topic of this debate—I thank my noble friend Lord Clement-Jones for bringing forward the Bill today.

I come from what is popularly known as the land of song. However, the Licensing Act 2003 has made it considerably more difficult for that for that song to be heard by an audience. As Minister, I introduced a culture strategy, Creative Future, which emphasised the importance of music in the cohesion of communities and for our tourist industry and economy in general. We planned to increase opportunities for professional musicians, and to reinvigorate amateur and semi-professional community music organisations such as choirs and brass bands. We planned to strengthen the infrastructure of small venues for the performance of all types of music. However, the Licensing Act 2003 proved a hindrance to those ambitions.

Your Lordships will be well aware of the reputation of Welsh National Opera and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. What your Lordships might not be aware of is that those renowned organisations also tour extensively in Wales, in small groups to small venues—to churches, village halls, schools and youth centres. They are funded by the Arts Council of Wales to do so to inspire our young people, provide community cohesion in deprived areas and provide entertainment in rural areas that get very little else by way of entertainment. The Arts Council of Wales has a very well established and highly respected scheme called Night Out, which helps to fund professional organisations in community buildings.

However, these initiatives have had to work against the grain of the Licensing Act. The time, cost and bureaucracy involved in getting a licence for a small venue when you are likely to hold only two or three such events a year is simply not worth it. Remember, those venues are

almost invariably run by volunteers, who have neither the time nor the expertise to go through that bureaucratic minefield. Geographically, Wales is 80 per cent rural and characterised by a network of village and church halls. The entertainment that they can host has been curtailed by the 2003 Act.

Your Lordships will also have heard of the National Eisteddfod. That internationally famous music festival is underpinned by a network of local festivals and eisteddfodau. The national youth Eisteddfod, the Urdd, holds preliminary competitions in every part of Wales and almost every school participates. The tip of the pyramid, you see, is underpinned by a very wide base. It is the community venues that provide the opportunities for a performer's first step in performing music. Without that first step, they will not take the second, which is to consider earning their living that way. This means that you lose your source of income for creative industries and the cultural tourism sector suffers. Those are enormously important to the Welsh economy; approximately 5 per cent of the economically active workforce works in the cultural sector in Wales. In Cardiff, that figure rises to 13 per cent.

Like the rest of the UK, Wales has suffered from the reduction in the number of premises licensed to sell alcohol that have sought a licence for live music. There has been a reduction to about one-quarter of those premises seeking a licence. That means that the opportunities are very much lower for those wishing to participate. Many of those licences, as my noble friend has indicated, already contain other restrictions. Therefore, I urge your Lordships to look at the evidence very carefully. The live music scene appears to flourish, but it is the upper end and the middle that are flourishing; the small-scale venues are suffering and declining. As the poorest part of the UK that is often overwhelmed by the culture of its much bigger neighbour, Wales has a particular need to develop its own culture and identity, and has suffered disproportionately from the impact of the Act.

(HL *Hansard*, cols [1325–7](#))

13. Lord Blencathra, 27 April 2011, Debate on the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill

My Lords, it is with more trepidation than usual that I seek to make my maiden speech on this Bill. Not only am I still in awe of the glorious history of this Chamber and the illustrious noble Lords who have preceded me in this place, and those who are currently serving, but I am deeply conscious of the fact that this House has at present noble Lords with a total of 250 years' service in the office of constable—from a president of the Police Superintendents' Association to chief constables, Metropolitan Police commissioners and senior inspectors of constabulary, some with bravery awards.

I was privileged to work with some of these noble Lords in the four years that I was Police Minister in the Home Office—the most satisfying, difficult, but enjoyable post that I ever held in government. Indeed, I so much enjoyed working with the splendid members of the police service, of all ranks, that I declined to leave my post on promotion, but stayed until the electorate forcefully removed me in 1997.

Before turning to the Bill, I wish to express my appreciation of the extent and depth of welcome that I have received from noble Lords on all sides of the House, and the extraordinary help given to me daily by the doorkeepers. As an ex-Chief Whip in the other place, I thought

that I had seen everything; but nothing can prepare one for the genuine warmth of welcome that a new Member receives in this House.

I support this Bill because it goes a long way towards getting national politics out of policing and lets chief officers concentrate on local priorities. Let us not kid ourselves: politics has been in policing for many years, and some of the ablest politicians I met were chief constables who were even better than the generals. However, this Bill concentrates any politics into the person of the locally elected police commissioner and reduces substantially Home Office political interference. I have been through six general elections and I know that the electorate will not vote capriciously, whimsically or erratically on things that matter to them—and local policing matters. We do the electorate a disservice if we think otherwise. In my opinion, neither of the voting systems proposed in Clause 57 will deliver extremists as police commissioners.

The old-fashioned concept of the balanced three-legged stool—the tripartite relationship of independent chief constables, strong police authorities footing the bill and the Home Office giving a bit of advice and guidance—is as mythological as the storyline of “Midsomer Murders”. It has long gone. The Home Office dictates too much local policing from Whitehall, with a plethora of targets and reporting back. The police authority is an anonymous body, not accountable to the electorate, and chief constables are first in the firing line when local politicians are unhappy about any aspect of policing in their neighbourhood.

We are told these days that all politics is local. That is a good thing. The Bill inserts an elected police commissioner between the electorate, with their aspirations and grievances, and chief constables, who have to deliver neutral, local policing. The policing panel of elected local authority councillors, the policing plan and all the consultation involved with police commissioners ensure that local priorities are addressed at that level. Chief constables should not then be dragged into political considerations. How many hours have chief constables spent in agonising over press releases on their funding settlement from the Government, and in trying to balance gentle criticism of the Government for not giving them enough money with trying to appear a champion of local interests? That should be the job of elected police commissioners, not of neutral chief constables. Rather than introduce politics for the first time, in my opinion the Bill takes out national politics and puts in local priorities.

The first clause that I looked at concerns repeals. I was delighted to see that Home Office target-setting powers are removed, with the exception of the power to set a strategic policing requirement on national security grounds. There was no harm in the past in the Home Office setting a few key targets for violent crime, burglary et cetera, but the excessive number of targets set in recent years means that this power should not be left on the statute book to be potentially abused in future.

When I look at the £50 million cost of electing police commissioners, even if it were £100 million, I would compare it to the total police budget of £13.8 billion this year. The cost of elected commissioners at £50 million is less than 0.5 per cent of local police funding. Of course, that is additional money that we are promised; it will not come out of the police settlement. Elsewhere, money is wasted. We can free up resources for the front line by speeding up the demise of the National Policing Improvement Agency, which spent £37 million on consultancy fees in the past two years alone. It performs essential services such as maintaining the police national computer homes—whatever number we have now—and the national DNA and fingerprint databases, which should be put into a trust company owned by all the police forces. Bramshill should be under Home Office control and the task of promoting best practice should be given back to Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary.

HMIC is one of the finest examples of the police and Home Office family. It has the most highly trained police officers in the United Kingdom, who visit all forces regularly and know what is happening on the ground. Yet the role of the NPIA was expanded to do what HMIC can do a dash sight better. When we consider in Committee Clauses 84 to 90 on the functions of HMIC, I hope that we can make it clear that in addition to inspecting forces and detecting strengths and weaknesses, HMIC will be the key body,

“identifying good practice and sharing experiences from within the service”.

That is a quotation from the NPIA website on one of its main activities. I suggest that considering all the functions that the NPIA performs with regard to improving police efficiency, there is nothing that HMIC cannot do better, and at much lower cost—and from my experience, it would be done by a body that is respected, feared slightly and utterly independent.

I have tried noble Lords’ patience for too long already and I shall save my other points for Committee. I simply conclude with this point. If your Lordships think that the opinions I have expressed are right, they should support the Bill. If, on the other hand, noble Lords think that I am utterly wrong, that my judgment is flawed and that I cannot be trusted, it is absolutely vital that your Lordships support the Bill, to prevent politicians like me being in charge of the police in future in the Home Office.

(HL *Hansard*, cols [178–80](#))

14. Lord Singh of Wimbledon, 1 December 2011, Debate on International Development Policy

My Lords, it is with a feeling of humility and trepidation that I rise to speak for the first time in this House, particularly after having listened to the earlier words and speeches that were put so movingly.

I shall say a few words on where I am coming from, and what I hope to bring to the House. I started life as a mining engineer, but not long after qualifying, was told by the then National Coal Board that British miners would never accept a Sikh mine manager. I was offered a job in the scientific department but politely declined, seeing it as an opportunity to go and see a bit of India, a country that I left as an infant. Surely people there would welcome me. They did not. I was seen as a Punjabi, and not welcome in the mines of West Bengal, but I stubbornly dug my heels in and gradually became accepted.

I returned to England to take up a post in a civil engineering management consultancy, and though there was some initial hostility, I was soon respected and valued and even assisted in taking a year off to do an MBA. It was while I was with this company that I noticed a strange end-of-day ritual that made me see the lighter side of our attitude to those we see as different.

We were on the fifth and sixth floors of an eight-storey building. Above us were the overseas civil engineers, who clearly thought themselves superior. They would go about with briefcases carrying labels of exotic places visited. At the end of the day they would get into the lift to go home. When the lift got to our floors, a curious thing would happen; those inside would unconsciously stick out their stomachs to give the impression that the lift was a little fuller than

it actually was. We would barge in none the less; the stomachs would gradually recede and we all became fellow work colleagues.

The lift would then move to the floors below, occupied by the Department of Health and Social Security. We all joined in in sticking out our stomachs to deter what, in our bigotry, we saw as a lower form of life entering our lift. However, again, they took no notice and got in; the stomachs would grudgingly recede and we all got to the ground floor as fellow human beings—until the next day.

This strengthening of common identity by looking negatively at others is all too common. We see it all too often with a group of people who have been speaking together on a street corner. If one goes away, you can be sure that those remaining will often make some negative comment about the person who has just left, to strengthen their newfound sense of unity. We see it in the behaviour of football crowds. In its most serious form, it can lead to the active persecution of those we call different.

Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, saw it in the India of his day some 500 years ago. He reminded us that we are all, men and women, equal members of the same human family and he criticised all notions and distinctions of race, caste or gender. These are 21st-century values being put forward in the 15th century. This theme has been central to my own life: from campaigning against apartheid in South Africa when it was unfashionable to do so, to supporting dissidents in the former Soviet Union and working with Amnesty International, and others, for greater social and political justice for all members of our human family. In this context, I fully endorse all the comments of the noble and right reverend Lord, Lord Harries, about Dalits, and the other remarks made by other speakers.

Some of us are quick to criticise some aspects of life in the United Kingdom but when we go abroad, even to our countries of origin, we see that this country is way ahead of much of the rest of the world—light years ahead in its freedoms, and its understanding and respect of different cultures and ways of life. Our country can take justifiable pride in the way that it has welcomed many from other lands and the lead it has taken in extending human rights, social justice and economic well-being to other parts of the world.

Moving to the central theme of today's debate, some 10 years ago I was invited to join a working group of DfID. I went as a cynic but was soon converted by the passion and genuine commitment of all those involved including, as has been mentioned, many voluntary organisations. I persuaded Sikhs to buy bonds of the GAVI alliance for the mass vaccination of 500 million people and urged the community to support the humanitarian work of DfID with its characteristic generosity. We also established Khalsa Aid, a Sikh charity.

At this time of economic recession, it is tempting to look to our need and ignore the suffering of others; in biblical terms, to cross to the other side of the street. Yet, as the continuing success of Children in Need showed, this is not the way of the British people. The euro crisis, economic difficulties in the United States and the emergence of new, major competitors also remind us that our economic future is inextricably linked to that of other nations, including the very poor. Britain is unique in the way it has led on many issues of justice and in the fight against poverty. It is a tribute to Britain that we are continuing to give assistance, with international development the highest priority. In the past year, Britain's development budget of just short of 0.6 per cent of GDP helped to train more than 95,000 teachers, build or refurbish 10,000 classrooms, train more than 65,000 health professionals and provide clean drinking water to more than 1.5 million people.

In addition to the ethical arguments, there are strong economic and geopolitical imperatives for helping the poor climb out of poverty. These include the development of soft power and influence in key areas. By 2050, Africa will be a key trading partner, rich in resources with a population of over 2 billion. Understandable reservations about the misuse of aid should be tackled by more stringent checks and never be used as an excuse for doing less or doing nothing.

I could go on, but I am conscious that a maiden speech should be brief. Before I finish, I would like to thank your Lordships for your extraordinary kindness in making me feel so welcome, with particular thanks to the noble and right reverend Lord, Lord Carey, and the noble Baroness, Lady Kennedy, in introducing me to your Lordships.

(HL *Hansard*, cols [435–7](#))

Is [421–3](#))

15. Lord Deighton, 8 November 2012, Debate on the Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012

My Lords, I would like to thank all noble Lords and the staff of this House for their kind welcome. I am particularly grateful to those who helped with my introduction last week. It was a special occasion for me, my family and friends. I thank the Doorkeepers, the attendants and the police on the parliamentary estate, who have also made starting here so much easier. It is a privilege to become a Member of your Lordships' House and to speak today on the topic of my work—or really my life—for the past seven years: the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games of London 2012.

Since the formation of the bid company in 2003, through to the culmination of the wonderful Games this summer, Members of this House have played a crucial role. I refer to my noble friend Lord Coe—my chairman at the organising committee—and my noble friend Lord Moynihan, chairman of the British Olympic Association. The noble Baroness, Lady Ford, is the chair of the Olympic Park Legacy Company, which was crucial in getting the World Athletics Championships here for 2017—a really tangible legacy. I mention also the noble Baroness, Lady Campbell, whose stewardship of UK Sport has delivered our greatest teams ever, both in the Paralympics and the Olympics, the noble Lord, Lord Hall, for overseeing our Cultural Olympiad; and, of course, the noble Baroness, Lady Grey-Thompson, the deputy chair of our athletes' committee, who is as effective in the boardroom as she was on the track.

London 2012 benefited enormously from the unwavering cross-party support of this House. This support did not, of course, preclude constructive scrutiny. It helped us to identify genuine public concerns and I would like to think that we adapted our plans accordingly, right through those seven years.

In this respect, I particularly note the contributions of my noble friends Lord Addington, Lady Doocey, Lord Glentoran, Lord Clement-Jones, Lord Bates, Lord Bell, the noble Lords, Lord Hall, Lord Mawson, Lord Rogers, Lord Wood and Lord Knight, and the noble Baroness, Lady Billingham, alongside all those who worked very hard for the Olympic Games Act 2006 to be granted Royal Assent. That enabled us to get out of the blocks very fast and get on with our

work, which, when you have only got seven years and an immovable deadline, is critical support.

I joined my noble friend Lord Coe as chief executive of the organising committee, just after the bid was won, after a career in the finance industry. I had worked for more than 20 years at Goldman Sachs, in both client-facing and management roles. I left in 2005 as the chief operating officer of the business in Europe.

My time at that firm taught me about leadership in the most demanding environments. I discovered the value of working with talented people and the benefits of teamwork; that there is nothing worse than an unhappy client; the importance of communicating clear goals; and the need to execute against these goals day in and day out to the highest standards. It is that experience which has guided my work at London 2012, where I have also enjoyed the unstinting support and wise guidance of my noble friend Lord Coe, with whom I shared a trust and friendship which enabled us to meet the project's many and diverse challenges. It is wonderful news for the Olympic movement in this country that my noble friend Lord Coe has just assumed the chair of the British Olympic Association. He is one of the most highly respected global sports figures, and will enhance British representation in international sport.

It is only right, at this point, that I also pay tribute to my other partner, in this case of 27 years, my wife Alison, without whose support and energy I would be half the man I am today—indeed, “half” is probably flattering my innate contribution.

During the 2012 project, I have witnessed the very best of British expertise, creativity, ingenuity, planning and delivery. I have seen the passion and generosity of spirit of the British people, and have been fortunate to work alongside exceptionally talented people. We staged an event that delivered more than £8 billion of contracts to UK businesses, created thousands of jobs, engaged millions of people and saw 90 per cent of the British population tune in, patriotically supporting both our athletes and our volunteers. This was an event which inspired a generation. “Inspire a generation” was our motto; it is our contribution to the legacy—not just in this country, but really right around the world. It has changed attitudes to London, it has changed attitudes to the UK and it has changed attitudes to disability. This was a global event, delivered by Britain, that the world is still talking about.

Now our attention turns, as it should, to ensuring that the inspirational power of the games is not lost, but is used to create lasting change. Our focus on regenerating the East End of London has left a transformed landscape. The foundations have already been laid to continue to support elite sport, to strengthen grassroots sport, to open up disability sport and to drive more sport through our schools and clubs. Millions of people across the UK were inspired to participate in the Games; my noble friend Lady Benjamin will talk about her work in diversity and inclusion. More than 2 million school children learnt about the Olympic and Paralympic values; more than 19 million attendances were recorded during the London 2012 Festival; around 10 million people were involved in the London 2012 Inspire programme; and more than a quarter of a million schoolchildren went to the Games for free. And who can forget our 70,000 Games makers; volunteers recruited from across the UK, from all ages, communities and faiths? Their energy, dedication and enthusiasm shine a light on the power of volunteering which we can build on.

The success of the London Games is a powerful advert for the capabilities of UK plc. The Games showcased British design, construction, event management and hospitality. I know that the Government have set strong new business targets on the back of the Games to secure an

economic legacy worth around £13 billion over four years. We must sprinkle our Olympic stardust across the UK economy.

A key business legacy from London 2012 is the demonstrated strength and vitality of the partnership between our public and private sectors. We have great businesses in this country and we also have great government at all levels. At the organising committee, we successfully integrated these capabilities and we facilitated strong partnerships that flourished. This experience is going to be central to my approach in my new role as a Treasury Minister, building on the excellent work of my noble friend, Lord Sassoon, driving the delivery of infrastructure projects in order to assure our international competitiveness.

Once again, I thank noble Lords for their welcome and their support. I look forward to contributing to this debate in future, and to many more for years to come.

(HL *Hansard*, cols [1105–7](#))

16. Baroness Lane-Fox of Soho, 13 May 2013, Debate on the Queen's Speech (3rd Day)

My Lords, I am not the first Lane-Fox to make a maiden speech, but I think I may be the first Baroness to have survived a virtual and a real-world crash. In 2000, the company I cofounded, lastminute.com, was navigating the choppy waters of the dot com boom and bust. Frankly, it was difficult—but she survived and thrived, as I was extremely fortunate to do when I was flung from a car in 2004.

The friendliness of this House is legendary, but I have been overwhelmed by the support and kindness of everybody, most recently in the past two minutes those who came to find me to tell me that I was coming up right now—but also the security staff, attendants, and catering and administrative staff. My two supporters, the noble Lord, Lord Chadlington, and the noble Baroness, Lady King, have given invaluable advice and were endlessly jolly on the day of my introduction, which banished nearly all my nerves.

My great aunt, Felicity Lane-Fox, gave her maiden speech in 1981, talking about disability rights, so I feel that it is particularly poignant that I can stand up and make a speech now and try to follow her great example. I would like to reassure any noble Lords who might remember Felicity that I do not intend to career down corridors towards my detractors, as she was given to doing in her newly electrified wheelchair—a weapon of persuasion.

When we started in 1998, we spent most of the time at lastminute.com convincing investors, suppliers and customers that the internet would be a force for good in the economy and was not about to blow up. It was surprising to me that well over 10 years later, when I was asked to become UK digital champion, I again spent my time convincing two successive Governments and millions of people in the country that the internet has much to offer. Shockingly, there are still 16 million people in the UK who do not have basic digital skills, and 7 million who have never been online. But we do have strong digital foundations: the internet accounts for 8 per cent of our GDP, the highest of any G20 country, and recent forecasts suggest that 25 per cent of our economic growth will come from the internet sector in future. We have competitively priced access and the highest number of online shoppers in the world. But I would like to argue that we should go much further and build on those foundations. I see usage of, and access to, the internet as a basic right that all citizens should be able to enjoy.

Why does it matter that so many people have never used the internet or do not have those basic digital skills? Partly, it is because we know that the majority come from the most disadvantaged communities—yet we also know that, if you are online, you are 40 per cent more likely to be able to get work and will achieve 25 per cent better results in education. Even the lowest income families will save up to £170 a year from online deals. In addition, the data show that feelings of loneliness and isolation are dramatically reduced when you get online. Some 1.5 million of the unskilled live alone and see nobody in a whole week.

British businesses also need support, as has been mentioned here already, and small and medium-sized business in particular. We know that only 30 per cent of them are able effectively to use online tools, and that there is a potential £18 billion in the economy if we are able to give them more advanced skills to sell and buy online.

I have been fortunate enough to meet many people who have told me of the transformative power of the internet on their lives, but one young man I met in Leeds I think of often. He told me that the internet had saved his life. Saved his life—really? Even I was amazed. But he described how, homeless and addicted to drugs, he had ended up at a drop-in centre in Leeds, where they had encouraged him to learn some new skills, and now he was making music and selling it all over the world as well as teaching other people in his community—a budding entrepreneur and giving something back.

We must not create a two-tier society but aspire to a universality of digital skills. We must make sure that the potential of all our citizens is unlocked. I believe that this will help the UK prosper and grow at a national level and at an individual one. Only when we focus on all aspects of digital growth, both infrastructure and skills, will we be a truly digital Britain. In this tough economic climate, the internet is such a powerful tool to help people manage the trickiest circumstances of their lives, whatever their age and whatever their location.

This is not an impossible challenge. The charity I founded, Go On UK, managed to reduce the offline population by 50 per cent in just six months in Liverpool last year by bringing together interesting partnerships in that one area. However, we know that all the data show that by far and away the most effective method of spreading skills is through peer-to-peer support, so, naturally, as I look around here, I see a room full of potential.

The internet has had a profound effect on my life. It has enabled me to start businesses and to work with charities and has helped me to endure long periods in hospital as well as deepening my cultural life in a way that I would never have thought possible. I am honoured to join this House and hope that from here I can continue to encourage and champion a truly digital Britain.

(HL *Hansard*, cols [159–60](#))

17. Bishop of Truro, 20 June 2013, Debate on Schools: Bullying

My Lords, I am honoured to be here and I thank noble Lords for their welcome. I also thank Black Rod and his staff for their marvellous help and support. I regard it as a privilege to be a Member of this House and look forward to playing my part. I thank in particular the noble Baroness, Lady Brinton, for initiating this debate, and for her powerful and passionate speech. I am very grateful to be able to make my maiden speech in this debate.

As Bishop of Truro I am fortunate to work across the county of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Last week I was on the Isles of Scilly visiting the Five Islands school, which is an all-through age five to 16 school. I spend a lot of my time across the diocese visiting schools and always enjoy engaging with staff and students. It is helpful for a bishop in the Church of England sometimes to be in places where the majority of people are relatively young.

As I am sure that your Lordships are aware, Cornwall is a beautiful part of the country. If this were not my maiden speech, and therefore non-controversial, I might have gone further and said that it was the most beautiful part of the country, but I will refrain. I am sure that noble Lords are also aware that it is one of the poorest parts of the country, with areas of real deprivation and facing major problems of rural isolation, low wages and, sadly, among many of the young, low aspiration. Bullying and mental health concerns can be compounded by living in rural areas.

I am delighted to say that much of my work is responding to invitations from the wider community to visit and learn more about what is happening right across the county. In this regard I am always concerned to hear of areas of life where there are real pressures. I know, sadly, that many people in the county suffer from various forms of mental illness and do not always have access to the support structures and services that they need.

As well as being the Bishop of Truro—here I declare an interest—I am chairman of the trustees of the Children's Society. Many noble Lords will know that this is a national charity, caring for the most deprived young people across the country. I will reinforce a point made by the noble Baroness, Lady Massey. One of the key features of our work is that we listen to the voice of children and young people.

In this debate I want to make the point that it is essential that we advocate for those who are often unable to advocate for themselves. Children who are either affected by mental health conditions or are being bullied are not in a good place to have their voice heard. It is important that we find ways to do just that. As is evident from the report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Bullying, many children who are bullied feel isolated from their peers. This can have a profoundly damaging impact on their well-being at that time and over the rest of their lives. There are two points that I would like to make about children who are particularly vulnerable to bullying. First, children living in poverty face a number of issues with bullying. This can be due to lacking things that their peers may have, such as not being able to go to the cinema, or to a friend's birthday party because they cannot afford a present. I underline what the noble Baronesses, Lady Brinton and Lady Massey, said about understanding child poverty in terms of the children's own understanding of what it is like to live in poverty. Children can miss out on school trips, or not have the same basic material goods that other children have. This will have an impact on a child's sense of self-worth. They are therefore more vulnerable to bullying and socialised isolation than their peers.

If not administered correctly, things such as free school meals can serve to highlight differences between children. In many schools children on free school meals are not easily identifiable, which reduces the risks of stigma. However, I am concerned that nearly half of secondary schools do not have cashless systems, meaning that those on free school meals may be singled out. My first point is to highlight the need to listen to the voice of children in poverty and note the implications on their lives of being bullied.

My second point relates to young carers. The latest census statistics reveal that there are 166,363 young carers in England, compared to around 139,000 in 2001. This is likely to be the

tip of the iceberg, as many young carers remain hidden from official sight for a host of reasons, including family loyalty, stigma or indeed bullying. As well as having the potential to suffer stigma and bullying, young carers are particularly vulnerable because their caring responsibilities can have a severe impact on their school life and long-term outcomes.

We know that one in 12 young carers is caring for more than 15 hours per week. Around one in 20 misses school because of their caring responsibilities. Young carers are more likely than the national average to be not in education, employment or training—one of the NEETs—between the ages of 16 and 19. That is why I welcome the Children's Minister's announcement last week that the Government will be looking at how the legislation for young carers might be changed so that rights and responsibilities are clearer to young carers and practitioners alike.

It is important that the Care Bill that covers the adults' legislation around social care, and the Children and Families Bill, work together to better identify and support young carers and their families. Schools and teachers can play a vital role in doing this. Schools also play an important role in promoting positive attitudes towards young carers and their families to help mitigate the impact of stigma, discrimination and bullying. It is important that children who struggle in school get the support and help that they need, and this includes mental health support. I fear that the provision of mental health support and the structures in place are not sufficient for the needs of young people and children.

I also want to ask if it is right that we should allow young people to be carers, which inevitably limits their childhood and opens them to a range of potential problems, not least bullying and missing out on education. These put added strain on their mental health. I dare wonder whether society is in danger of being the bully in allowing young people to be carers. What about the rights of the children and young people themselves? In conclusion, I welcome this debate on such an important matter. I am glad to be able to speak as a bishop and as chairman of the trustees of the Children's Society. I am especially concerned about children living in poverty who are vulnerable to bullying and to mental health concerns and who need advocates on their behalf. Equally in need of advocates are the young carers, who again are open to being bullied. I question whether we should not take more seriously the issue of whether we can do more to allow such children and young people to have their right to a childhood. I look forward to the contributions of other Members and hearing from the Minister about the work that Government are doing to support those children who are indeed being bullied at school.

(HL Hansard, cols [413–5](#))