

Constitution Unit Lecture, Monday 16th March 2015**Lord Lisvane KCB**

First, let me express my thanks to Professor Robert Hazell and the Constitution Unit for the invitation to speak this evening. This is an especially appropriate moment to thank Robert, who announced a fortnight ago that he will step down as Director in September. He founded the Constitution Unit, and over the last two decades has directed the formidable body of work and research that the Unit has carried out, to the great benefit of all who take an interest not just in the constitution and Parliament, but also in devolution, human rights, the civil service and the judiciary.

And in case this sounds a little too much like an obituary, I am delighted that Robert will stay closely involved in the work of the Unit and with UCL. He has my best wishes, as has Professor Meg Russell, the current Deputy Director, who I know will be a worthy successor.

Robert asked me to give what he described as an end-of-term report on the 2010 Parliament. It would be an act of temerity to attempt anything so definitive, so what I propose to do is to pick out a few features of the Parliament that is now drawing peacefully towards its close, and then to look into a rather cloudy crystal ball at the 2015 Parliament.

We embarked on the 2010 Parliament with the disaster of the expenses scandal still a raw wound. But the Commons took in 227 new Members, who provided a sea change. They knew exactly what they were getting themselves into, and they provided a fresh outlook and an enthusiasm that pervaded the House.

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Coalition politics may be a factor, but the 2010 Parliament seems likely to be the most rebellious of modern times, which is a very healthy sign. And in August 2013 Parliament said “no” to the possibility of military action in Syria; a welcome assertion of Parliamentary confidence which also had immediate repercussions in France and in the United States.

There were extensive changes in the Commons. The Deputy Speakers were elected for the first time, by secret ballot, in May 2010; and select committee chairs and members were elected for the first time in June 2010. In the same month the Backbench Business Committee was created and backbench time allocated in the Chamber and in Westminster Hall. This meant that the inability of an individual MP to put a proposition to the House and have it voted upon, which had disappeared as part of the Jopling reforms in the 1990s, and set the Commons apart from most Parliamentary Chambers across the world, was at last corrected.

The use of Urgent Questions was greatly increased by the Speaker – something I had advocated in the so-called “75-point plan” in 2009 – and produced heightened topicality and accountability.

Once again – perhaps inevitably, and certainly not for the last time – there were further changes to sitting hours. Monday sittings in Westminster Hall were introduced for debates on e-petitions, and a new e-petition system overseen by a new Petitions Committee is in train.

The notice period for amendments on report was increased from two days to three; and a procedure for a statement in the Chamber on a newly-published select committee report, followed by questions to the chair, was introduced. Lay members were added to the Committee on Standards. The Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy was established.

Responsibility for MPs’ pay was transferred to the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority in May 2011, and responsibility for pensions in October 2011.

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The Fixed-Term Parliaments Act received Royal Assent in September 2011, and there were fundamental changes to the procedures for financial scrutiny and the passage of Finance Bills, partly necessitated by the move from sessions running from November to October to those running from May to April.

Quite a lot of activity, then, and a high degree of institutional confidence.

And I hope that you will acquit me of providing a personal apologia, but I think it is right to mention some of the things that the House of Commons Service has achieved in the course of this Parliament as a result of professional, committed management.

We (and I think I can still say “we”) achieved the savings programme, reducing budgets by 17% with no diminution in service; we dramatically improved financial management (remarked upon approvingly by the National Audit Office) and commercial skills. We established a joint commercial and procurement division with the House of Lords, replacing three entirely separate and independent units. We further reduced the catering subsidy.

We set in hand the new Education Centre, which will open later this year, more than doubling the number of young people who can come and experience Parliament for themselves each year.

With the Lords, we created the Parliamentary Digital Service, whose first Director has just taken up post, to make Parliament digital by default, not just digital by choice, as well as supplying all the infrastructure needed to support the work of Parliament.

The Questions and Answers project has delivered paperless written questions and answers (some 50,000 a year) and simultaneous web publication. The majority of select committees, and all official committees, are now paperless. The Options Appraisal process for the restoration and renewal of the Palace was set in hand.

We initiated the Parliamentary studies module, now taken up by 17 universities across the country, and increased the programme of constituency days, with a substantial increase in take-up. We engaged proactively with the media through briefing meetings on procedural and Parliamentary business issues; Parliament Week each November was developed and greatly expanded; we launched the new guidebook, audio tours, and tours for people with visual impairments.

We established four workplace equality networks: Parliout, ParliReach, ParliAble and Parliagender. As Diversity Champion I took particular pleasure in this.

And one of the things of which I was most proud was establishing the Clerk of the House's Apprenticeship Scheme; we took in ten apprentices, mostly from East London, who had little to look forward to in terms of job opportunities. We gave them real jobs for their year's apprenticeship, combined with level 3 NVQs, and I am delighted to say that all competed successfully for jobs in the House Service at the end of their apprenticeship – a 100% conversion rate.

And we kept an ever more demanding show successfully on the road.

I have been aware of some mild interest in the process for appointing my successor, so I thought I might say a word or two about that.

I've made no secret of the fact that I believe that the principal official of the House of Commons must be able to combine expert knowledge of the House's work with being able to take responsibility for the House Service. But towards the end of my time as Clerk it became clear to me that the weight of the job and the workload were so great that a Chief Operating Officer was needed, to take some delegated responsibilities off the shoulders of the Clerk. I'm not after sympathy here: as Humphrey Appleby once said to Jim Hacker: "Well, Prime Minister, it's your job and you wanted it".

In the event I retired before we could make progress on that; but – setting aside the unedifying events of last Autumn, I think that Jack Straw's Governance Committee did a first-class job. I would say that, I suppose, because their recommendations were very close to what I proposed in my evidence to them.

They were clear that the principal official has to be someone who embodies, and is the authority on, the primary purpose of the institution, and that is the Clerk of the House. They picked up the concept of the chief operating officer, but I think were then caught in a dilemma of nomenclature: “Chief Executive” would look too much as though the job was being split, which it emphatically wasn’t; and “Chief Operating Officer” would veer too much the other way. So they settled on “Director General” but as this official will answer to the Clerk of the House, it is clear that in all respects he or she will be a Chief Operating Officer.

The important recommendations relate to the House of Commons Commission. I said in my evidence that the Commission had become trapped in the legislative amber of the 1970s, while corporate governance moved on by light-years. In effect, the Commission was an executive committee composed of non-executives, and a long way, in composition and operation, from anything like modern best practice. The Straw recommendations, now embodied in the House of Commons Commission Bill which has almost completed its passage, add real independent externals to the Commission, and executive members: the Clerk and the Director-General.

So I warmly welcome the Straw prescription, and I look forward to seeing the practical results. I hope, incidentally, that it will make the Commission more diverse; at present out of six members it has five men, one woman (16%) and no BME representation. The Management Board, on the other hand, has nine members, of whom five are women (56%) and one BME (11%).

Before I leave the 2010 Parliament, may I answer a question I am often asked: What’s it like living with a documentary crew?

When Michael Cockerell’s film was first mooted, I felt that, whatever views individual Members might take, this was something that the House of Commons Service had to engage with enthusiastically. We had a really good story to tell and an excellent opportunity to tell it.

No fly-on-the-wall documentary is ever hazard-free, of course, and some have been bitterly regretted. But – especially bearing in mind his previous work, especially the Great Officers of State series, I was confident that Michael would be exacting but fair.

Those who have seen the programmes will have formed their own views, but one of the most interesting things about the broadcasts was the level of public engagement they achieved. These figures come from the programme makers, Atlantic Productions.

The series average was well over 2 million viewers for each episode, which is very high for this timeslot on BBC2.

But the social media impact is even more impressive. During a single programme there were 400,000 people engaged in the Twitter feed. The overall reach of these tweets, which is calculated by adding the total followers of each user who tweeted using the hashtag *#Inside the Commons* was over 10 million.

And the opening episode was the No 1 trending topic on Twitter during the broadcast (even though Harper Lee's second novel had just been announced!). I found that engagement with Parliament (overwhelmingly approving) very encouraging.

That's enough about the 2010 Parliament. What about the world we will be waking up to on 8th May (or in my case, being an election junkie who stays up and some have been bitterly regretted all night with good friends to watch the coverage, what will we see bleary-eyed over breakfast)?

Unless you are the sort of person who backed Coneygree to win the Cheltenham Gold Cup on Saturday, you will probably want to save your money. I have had two bets with my Reverend wife (that isn't a joke, by the way – she really is a Reverend and not a bookie); one on a Conservative minority government, laid off in proper Cross-Bench fashion by the same amount on a Labour minority government.

Whatever the result – whether there is material enough to form another coalition, of whatever composition; whether the SNP have enough seats to play a lone hand, and so on, a key date will be that set in the Dissolution Proclamation for the first meeting of Parliament after the election. We can confidently expect that to be at least as long after polling day as it was in 2010 (12 days), and possibly longer.

Longer would be sensible in order to accommodate inter-party talks without too constraining a deadline; and I hope that it will be widely understood that in these circumstances the present government continues in office, though with greatly reduced powers of initiative. The requirement is to form a new government (even of the same party or parties), not to fill a vacuum, so that in itself is not an argument for excessive haste.

The question then arises of how Parliament and the Monarch cope with the result. There is enthusiasm in some quarters for a meeting of Parliament immediately after polling day, but I don't see how that would work as no MP would have taken the Oath or affirmed, and speaking or voting other than on the election of the Speaker vacates the Member's seat "as if the Member were dead", which is a bit of a turn-off.

One possibility canvassed is that of a nomination vote in the Commons after (possibly several days after) the Speaker has been elected and the Members have been sworn, but before the Queen's Speech.

Let's leave aside for the moment the oddity of serious substantive proceedings taking place in the Commons before the State Opening – although it would be a considerable oddity. If the Motion before the House were to be "That the Rt Hon XYZ do seek the authority of Her Majesty to form an Administration", I see no insuperable problem – after all, something rather similar is used for the selection of the first Minister in Scotland.

But the question would arise of whether amendments might be tabled (and selected) to such a Motion (for which the Scottish procedure, which simply chooses between candidates, gives no opportunity).

If those amendments were in the form "on the condition that" – perhaps, to take a purely random example "on the condition that the Trident facilities at Faslane and Coulport are closed within six months" then the picture could become very confused. The conditions now sought to be imposed are in effect conditions

upon the Monarch's choice (or would certainly be seen as such), and would risk bringing The Queen into the political arena in a way which it is imperative that we avoid.

So I think we have to return to the tried and tested process of the leader of a new Administration putting his or her programme before Parliament in the Queen's Speech. Depending on the circumstances, it might be a very short Queen's Speech indeed. Amendments can of course be moved to the Loyal Address which is then debated but, in this context, these are conditions placed on the government that has already been formed, not on Her Majesty's choice of Prime Minister.

Whatever happens, I fancy that a fairly early event in the 2015 Parliament will be the repeal of the Fixed Term Parliaments Act, something about which I shall shed no tears.

An even earlier event, depending partly but only partly on the outcome of the election, and whether the voice of the SNP will be decisive, will be an attempt to deal with variable devolution – what one might term a multi-speed Britain. At the moment this is seen largely in the context of EVEL – English votes for English laws, although it goes a lot wider than that.

At the moment we have a number of possibilities on the table: an English veto at each stage of the legislative process; a voice for English MPs at Committee and Report stage, which the House could override at Third Reading; the McKay proposal for a English Grand Committee to pass a Legislative Consent Motion after Report and before Third Reading; and the LibDem proposal that an English Grand Committee should be constituted so as to reflect the votes cast in England, not the numbers of MPs.

If there is a separate procedure for EVEL Bills, the process has to start long before they get anywhere near Westminster. In order to apply any of the EVEL procedures so far suggested, a Bill needs to be certified (by the Speaker, presumably) as applying only to England.

So it needs to be drafted so that it will be certifiable. But even with the measure of devolution to Wales and more to come, the legacy of the Laws in Wales Act 1535 is still live; there is a single legal system. And of course there are cross-border issues which have to be taken into account. To take an example at random, if there is a penalty for taking a child away from Court-awarded custody, there needs to be a cross-border provision for making that effective.

Now, do you store up the Welsh provisions relating to English-only legislation, and have a Wales (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill once a session. I don't think so. So it may be that EVEL has already become EWVEWL – English and Welsh votes for English and Welsh laws.

And even if you grasp the nettle of whether English (or English and Welsh) votes are going to be advisory or determinant, how does the Commons deal with Lords Amendments?

And for real anoraks, what about an amendment in Committee that turns a certified England-only Bill into a UK-wide Bill? That would be perfectly orderly, because changes to extent – which parts of the UK a Bill covers – are always within the scope of a Bill.

Let me turn to another issue that will dominate the 2015 Parliament and its successors. Looking around this beautifully appointed Committee Room, it is difficult to imagine just how much work is needed on the Palace. But this is the reality that Parliament must confront.

I am very proud to have had a hand in initiating the process of Restoration and Renewal (now known as R&R). I felt strongly that we could not and should not be another generation of stewards of this unique building who shied away from their obligations.

The truth is, of course, that there is never a good time; over the years it has been seen as too expensive, too embarrassing, too inconvenient, too soon after the War – that's an insight into the chronic nature of the problem! – but at the same time the building has been failing, and the amazing efforts of generations of skilled and committed Estates staff are no longer enough to put off the evil day.

I coined the now widely used description of the basement of the Palace as “the cathedral of horror” because that was exactly how I felt about it – services vital to keeping the show on the road: water, air-conditioning, sewage, high-pressure steam, electricity, IT, telephones and all the rest were overlain one upon another as Parliament’s requirements and the march of technology imposed ever new requirements. And at the same time the stonework is flaking and the roofs are leaking.

I have to say that in the early stages of giving these problems the profile they needed, there was a good deal of incredulity. Indeed, I heard one senior figure describe this as “a problem dreamed up by officials for their own purposes”. But there has been a lot of traffic down the Damascus Road since then, and I am confident that everyone now believes that Something Must Be Done.

The question is, what, how and when? The two Houses will, I hope sooner rather than later, have to take an exceptionally difficult decision. Option One is to ramp up the current programme of so-called “aggressive maintenance” which would be the slowest way of tackling the problem, but would keep Parliament on site, even if for many years it were to be a building site. And if the deal were to be that Parliament did not sit for say four months a year, how practical is that? The reason for the September sittings in the Commons is avowedly to avoid the Government being unscrutinised for two-and-a-half months, which in turn implies an alternative meeting place for both Houses during those four months a year – which would be needed in any event in case of a recall of Parliament.

Option Two is a successive decant, under which one House and then the other would move out, with the remaining House using the facilities of the other. This may seem an attractive option, but one inescapable factor will have to be dealt with; there are 98 risers taking services from floor to floor.

Most of them contain a lot of asbestos – properly contained and controlled, I am glad to say – but major works will pose a huge containment challenge. And I guess there will be issues about the practicality of installing common services half by half.

The third, full-fat Option Three would involve a total decant for four or five years. Quite apart from the challenge of finding and running suitable premises, there is a huge emotional attachment to the Palace on the part of Members of both Houses and many others. But as I told one senior figure (a different one!) who expressed visceral opposition to a decant: “if the main sewer fractures, we will be decanting next Thursday, never mind in 2020.”

Of course, if Option Two or Option Three is chosen, there might be some exciting opportunities to consider. Taking Parliament to the People, and meeting in different places around the United Kingdom (assuming that by then it is still a United Kingdom...) would be an amazing thing to achieve, but it would also be a colossal administrative undertaking – just ask those Australian State Parliaments who have tried it, with a much, much smaller membership. And – when beady eyes are upon the cost of R&R at Westminster – it would also not be cheap. But there are undoubtedly possibilities.

If Parliament does decant, whether the Houses one by one or both together, other factors will come into play. Churchill’s dictum of “We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us” has lost none of its power. If the Commons sat in a big hemicycle, with electronic voting, would they want to come back to a comparatively tiny Chamber, with its ecclesiastical layout, and Division Lobbies? There is a host of similar issues.

So let me come back to the big decision, which I hope will be taken sooner rather than later as we are living on borrowed time. I’m not going to speculate on figures ahead of the publication of the Deloitte Consortium’s report, but the cost of any of the options will inevitably be daunting.

So we need to see the opportunities as well; it may be that this sort of long-life capital investment will – depending on the state of the economy – be much more attractive in five or six years’ time.

We need to think about the skills and crafts that the project will need and nurture. Having been chairman of the fund-raising trust for one of our ancient cathedrals, I know very well the importance of these increasingly scarce skills to our heritage environment. And why should we not take the chance to have a

“Palace of Westminster Academy” as a centre for skills excellence and the training of apprentices?

Whichever option is chosen, the means of accomplishing it must be appropriate to the task. This means that there can be no question of managing it from our own resources. It will be enough of a task for Parliament to be a really effective intelligent client. I am sure that there will need to be a delivery authority, probably set up under primary legislation, which will also provide an opportunity to close off the myriad planning issues which will arise.

I have spoken airily about choosing options, but one issue hasn’t had the attention it deserves. The two Houses are independent of one another and there is no provision for formal joint decision-making. So it’s really rather important that both Houses decide the same thing! I see a small Joint Committee as the ideal vehicle for preparing the decision; it would involve Members of both Houses, and could provide the sort of transparency in analysing advice, providing public access and so on, which would be difficult for the established administrative channels to achieve.

And of course the choice is not just between Options One, Two or Three. If you imagine a nine-square matrix, with One, Two and Three down the left-hand side, then you have – across the matrix – three main ways of implementing each. The first is like for like: putting the Palace back in mint condition, but not changing it. The second is to make it fully compliant with, for example, all the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act – no small task. And the third is to tackle the challenge with real imagination. How could we make Parliament more accessible to our visitors? Could we make security much easier and cheaper by separating flows? Could we create exciting new meeting spaces by glassing over the courtyards? The only limit would be one of imagination.

Before leaving R&R, I should make it clear that, without seeing the published report, I have no preference. Each of the Options will be a huge task. None is cheap and none is easy. But the great thing is that we all agree action cannot be long delayed.

Whatever happens to the Palace, I hope that Parliament will increasingly be doing its work in new ways, supported by digital technology; and, crucially, through that technology more open and comprehensible to the citizen.

In September 2013 I put a paper to the Speaker suggesting the establishment of a Digital Democracy Commission. I felt that we were off the pace, and risked lagging ever further behind. We needed to harness unbelievably capable technology, not just to improve the business processes supporting Parliament, but also to support a wholly new type of outreach and engagement.

I warmly congratulate the Speaker on the enthusiasm with which he tackled the challenge, and I was delighted to see the outcome. The Report of the Digital Democracy Commission is ambitious but wholly in the right direction. It is also realistic, for example tackling the issue of the digital divide. This is narrowing, but by March last year 6.4 million of our citizens, or 13%, had never used the Internet, and among people with disabilities the figure rises to 30% – something of which in equality terms we need to be especially mindful.

In making the most of new technology, the key thing is a change in our collective mindset, so that we are digital by default, not by choice. A digital Parliament is – I am delighted to say – just around the corner, and I hope that if even half the aspirations of the Digital Democracy Commission are realised this will have a real impact on the democratic disengagement which worries us all.

One thing to which the Commission gave special emphasis was the need to understand the work of Parliament. So this is obviously the right time to broadcast a cheeky advertisement for the new, seventh edition of *How Parliament Works* – new, and improved in every way – which will be published on 27th March. Rush to get your copies then. And in view of what I have just been saying, I should also mention that it will be available as an e-book.

What about other changes in the 2015 Parliament? A House Business Committee, as recommended by Tony Wright's Committee in 2009? In the Coalition Agreement in 2010, the government undertook to establish a House Business Committee “by the end of the third year of the Parliament” but nothing has happened, the quoted reason being that there is “insufficient agreement as to how such a committee might operate”.

I think that one of the problems has been that such a Committee is all things to all people, and there has been no public analysis of the options. Would it be the usual channels continuing to meet in private but reporting their conclusions publicly? Or would it be the full-strength Wright option of a committee with a broad membership proposing a draft agenda to be voted on (and possibly amended) by the House each week? Or something in between? There is certainly no great enthusiasm on the front benches on either side; but of course the arithmetic in the new Parliament may change that.

I am confident that select committees in both Houses will continue to do a good job in raising the reputation of Parliament. People like to see Members from across political divides working together and forming their views on the basis of carefully gathered evidence, not prejudging conclusions; and providing an alternative, authoritative voice on difficult issues. For example, the new select committees to be appointed by the House of Lords, on sexual violence in conflict, on the Equality Act 2010, on social mobility for school leavers, and on national policy for the built environment, have great potential.

Turning to Commons Committees, I should perhaps express my unease at the way it is thought by some to be acceptable to harangue witnesses who are giving evidence. It may be that they richly deserve criticism, and such exchanges certainly make good headlines; but select committees derive their authority from basing their conclusions on weighing the evidence that they take. Considered criticism in an agreed report is much harder to shrug off than insults across a committee table. As Churchill said, “when you have to kill a man, it costs nothing to be polite”.

And there is a more serious point here, too. The possibility of a formal right of reply for people criticised in Parliamentary proceedings has been on the table for some time. If a committee is a tribunal for the purposes of human rights, and it damages reputations without due process, then that will add to pressure for such a change.

The election of chairs and members of select committees has been a refreshing change. Among other things, it has allowed the election to two influential

chairs, of health and defence, of two Members who came into the Commons only in 2010, Sarah Wollaston and Rory Stewart. Such a thing would have been unthinkable only a few years ago.

Oral Questions in the Commons will continue to be a major item, and continue to be very different from those in the Lords. Given the success of topical questions, I wonder whether the time hasn't come to make all questions topicals, without removing the right of any Member to table a substantive question.

A focus of controversy in this Parliament has been Prime Minister's Questions. No-one expects the occasion to be held in reverent silence. But the level of noise, the excessive stage-management and above all organised barracking have been a turn-off for many people. It also wastes the opportunity, rare among Parliaments across the world, to question the nation's Chief Executive for half an hour every sitting week.

The Leader of the Opposition has suggested that the PM might be questioned by a panel of citizens instead. This would be an excellent piece of public engagement, and I am sure would be a very good thing to do. But in a way it would also be an acknowledgement that Parliament had failed in one of its key tasks. My strong preference would be to replace at least every other session of PMQs with a version held in a Committee Room, where Members chosen by ballot (just as they are for PMQs in the Chamber) could question the Prime Minister in a calmer and more productive atmosphere.

The scrutiny of legislation will continue to be a challenge for Parliament (even if the make-up of the new House and the new Government means that we do not have a great deal of legislation for a while at least).

Here the eternal verities remain. Properly thought-out proposals, agreed across government, will assist Parliamentary scrutiny and minimise drafting on the hoof; but the sometimes artificial time pressures of the legislative programme will always be lurking.

Many of the prescriptions remain the same – more draft Bills (although harder to achieve in the first session of a Parliament); and more bills committed to

select and joint committees. In the Commons, bills might be committed to select committees after second reading for the same degree of evidence-based scrutiny, but in this case there would be the opportunity of formal amendment, which would have to be overturned by the Government on report.

I would like to see the principle of a bill tackled in a different way. In the 19th century, it was routine for a bill to be formally introduced only after approval of a motion to bring in the bill (a procedure that survives today with ten-minute rule bills). Why not seek approval for the essence of a legislative proposal, and for its aims, before embarking upon scrutiny of a major bill? Another approach might be committal to a select committee as to the principle of a bill, immediately after a bill had been introduced, in order to inform second reading and subsequent stages.

There are other weapons in the armoury: I think that the Commons evidence-taking public bill committee procedure should now be applied to bills which start in the Lords, not just those that start in the Commons. I would like to see extensive use of purposive clauses, stating what that particular part of a bill is intended to achieve. The use of “Keeling Schedules” showing the text of an existing statute as proposed to be amended, should be universal.

The time has certainly come to have a comprehensive overhaul of procedures relating to private legislation, and I hope that the 2015 Parliament will see a joint committee set up to do that. And despite the excellent scrutiny job done by the House of Lords on many statutory instruments, the black hole of delegated legislation still needs to be tackled; and I commend to you the recent Hansard Society report on the subject.

I suppose it is possible that further efforts will be made to reform the House of Lords. As a very new boy, I had better keep a low profile on this for the time being. I would observe only that I am a firm supporter of appointment (I can hear the ghost of the late Mandy Rice-Davies at my elbow saying “Well, he would say that, wouldn’t he?”). But in the context of Lords reform, I think an aspect that does not receive as much attention as it should is that when Parliament’s forces are ranged against over-mighty Executives (and Executives always tend to be over-mighty) one of the great strengths of Parliament is that

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the Houses are complementary, and not competing, in the way that they work.
The whole is assuredly greater than the sum of the parts.

And that is probably a good note on which to end.

Thank you very much for your patience.