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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS
OFFICIAL REPORT

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Abbreviation	Party/Group
CB	Cross Bench
Con	Conservative
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GP	Green Party
Ind Lab	Independent Labour
Ind LD	Independent Liberal Democrat
Ind SD	Independent Social Democrat
Ind UU	Independent Ulster Unionist
Lab	Labour
LD	Liberal Democrat
LD Ind	Liberal Democrat Independent
Non-afl	Non-affiliated
PC	Plaid Cymru
UKIP	UK Independence Party
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

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House of Lords

Thursday, 26 November 2015.

11 am

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Rochester.

Introduction: Baroness Featherstone

11.07 am

The right honourable Lynne Choona Featherstone, having been created Baroness Featherstone, of Highgate in the London Borough of Haringey, was introduced and made the solemn affirmation, supported by Lord Tope and Baroness Northover, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Introduction: Lord Hague of Richmond

11.12 am

The right honourable William Jefferson Hague, having been created Baron Hague of Richmond, of Richmond in the County of North Yorkshire, was introduced and took the oath, supported by Baroness Stowell of Beeston and Lord Finkelstein, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Oaths and Affirmations

11.17 am

Lord Fairfax of Cameron took the oath, following the by-election under Standing Order 9, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Superfast Broadband

Question

11.18 am

Asked by Lord Holmes of Richmond

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of when 100% of the United Kingdom population will be able to enjoy the benefits of reliable superfast broadband.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Department for Culture, Media and Sport (Baroness Neville-Rolfe): My Lords, delivering superfast broadband to 100% of UK premises is challenging, as experience with our delivery programme has shown. In the final 5% of the UK, these challenges increase because of higher investment costs and lack of existing infrastructure, so it is good news that the Prime Minister has announced that, by 2020, a designated provider or providers will be obliged to connect people, no matter where they live, at minimum speed up to a reasonable cost threshold.

Lord Holmes of Richmond (Con): My Lords, does the Minister agree that if we are to rebalance the UK economy and push productivity, superfast broadband will be a vital part of that plan? Will it be a key element in the digital transformation plan which will be published early next year?

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: I entirely agree with my noble friend.

Lord Gordon of Strathblane (Lab): Would the Minister share my curiosity at the Prime Minister shifting the Government's position from a universal service commitment—which is very important—to a universal service obligation, which carries with it a possibility of legal challenge? If I live in a remote area and do not get good broadband, who do I sue?

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: My Lords, one reason this will take us until 2020 is that we must get it right. We must look at exactly this sort of issue. Obviously, we will have to legislate and find the right way of implementing the USO to deal with the complexities and get ahead. This is now a utility and it makes sense to have a stronger commitment.

Lord Maxton (Lab): My Lords, what exactly does BT charge to put in a telephone line, which is essential before you have superfast broadband? You must have some form of glass fibre link into the house. What is its charge in remote areas?

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: My Lords, I do not know the answer to that. There are a number of different providers and charges vary because it is a competitive market.

Lord Sugar (Non-Aff): My Lords, the noble Baroness will recognise the high capital cost of laying fibre cables. The return on investment simply does not work to service areas where there are not so many people. I understood from her that the Government will insist that service providers carry this out. Does she not feel that this will end up with other consumers having their prices increased to recover the costs of this?

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: My Lords, this is an important mission but time is needed for legislation, proper consultation and developing the arrangements with Ofcom. Obviously, the financial arrangements are to be determined and we will look at different options, including an industry cost-sharing mechanism.

Lord Skelmersdale (Con): My Lords, the problem in rural areas where you have scattered houses is that, as was just said, fibre-optic cables are not appropriate—but satellite is. Does my noble friend intend to alter the planning Acts so that satellite dishes can be put on listed buildings?

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: My Lords, my noble friend is absolutely right that satellite is part of the solution to ensure access for everyone to at least two megabits per second by the end of this year. I would be cautious about planning, and particularly about historic buildings.

Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville (LD): My Lords, given the undoubted importance of universal coverage, could the Minister update the House on the

[BARONESS BAKEWELL OF HARDINGTON MANDEVILLE] progress of the state aid negotiations? Is she satisfied with the progress of rollout to business parks in the connecting Devon and Somerset areas?

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: I will write to the noble Baroness about the progress in Brussels, which I know my friend in the other place, Ed Vaizey, has been extremely busy on. I will also write about the particular circumstances in Devon and Cornwall. Actually, I was a sceptic on this but we have made a lot of progress. I look forward to telling her about that.

Lord Stevenson of Balmacara (Lab): My Lords, I suppose that in these post-austerity times we must be ready for a flurry of announcements and good news all round, and broadband is no exception. But where exactly do the Government stand given the two slightly contradictory statements we have now had? The Chancellor pledged in the last Budget to introduce broadband speed of 100 megabits into nearly all homes in the country. Does that fit with what the Minister just said? Exactly what speed can we expect?

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: My Lords, the Prime Minister talked about 10 megabits per second because that is fast enough to enable households to, in combination, stream films, watch catch-up TV, make a videocall and browse online. The expectation is to get there by 2020. Clearly, ultra-fast speed is incredibly important, too. It was probably not noticed, but there was an announcement in yesterday's Budget that we are setting up a broadband investment fund that will look at public/private support for alternative network development, looking at ultra-fast broadband in particular.

Lord Tebbit (Con): My Lords, could my noble friend say how we equate the provision of a service such as clean drinking water as against broadband services? I lived not long ago—and many people live now—in a place where there was no mains water supply. Is broadband really more essential than water?

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: I, too, was brought up on a farm with no mains water supply and I survived. The point we are making is that broadband has become like the other utilities. It is really important, particularly as we move online—for example, for public services—so we have to try to extend it further. We want to extend it as far as possible and raise our game. That does not mean that at the top of every mountain there will be broadband, but there is a lot we can do by 2020 and we are investing in that.

NHS: Food Banks

Question

11.25 am

Asked by **Lord Beecham**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the provision of food banks at, and the distribution of food to people in need by, NHS hospitals.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health (Lord Prior of Brampton) (Con): My Lords, decisions about such schemes are rightly

made locally. The Government's policy approach is that economic growth, productivity and employment offer the best route to give people a better future and reduce poverty. We implemented a long-term economic plan which is working. The employment rate is at a new record high and earnings are growing. We also announced that a new national living wage will be introduced from April 2016 for those aged 25 and above.

Lord Beecham (Lab): My Lords, four weeks ago the *Guardian* reported that hospitals in Tameside in Greater Manchester and in Birmingham were opening food banks on their premises. In the ward I represent in Newcastle, all six primary schools and the local secondary school run a breakfast club for their pupils. These stark facts are reflective not of lifestyle choices, as some would have it, but of real need. When will the Departments of Health, Education, Work and Pensions and the Treasury come together to develop and implement policies to address the scandal of food poverty in what is still one of the richest countries in the world?

Lord Prior of Brampton: My Lords, the people running the schemes in the two hospitals in Birmingham and in Tameside are to be congratulated. I am not sure that there is a similar scheme in Newcastle. I know from experience of homelessness how difficult it is, for example, to discharge patients when they have nowhere to go, with the risk of discharging people onto the street who will then come back into hospital. The work they are doing in those two hospitals is to be applauded. We have a welfare safety net in this country. Tragically, anywhere around the world there will be some people who fall through that net. The fact that there are voluntary groups and charities prepared to help pick those people up is a cause for celebration. It is that combination of a state welfare net with an active civic society which makes this country as good as it is.

Baroness Walmsley (LD): My Lords, does the Minister agree that the location of food banks should not be at the top of the priority list of cash-strapped NHS hospitals, most of which are in deficit at the moment? Does he also agree that food banks need to be conveniently located so that those who need them can visit them regularly? I would rather hope that those people would not have to visit hospitals regularly.

Lord Prior of Brampton: I do not think that anyone is saying that the food banks in the hospitals in Birmingham and Tameside are their top priority, I just think that it is a very human reaction of people working in those hospitals who want to help very vulnerable people who are being discharged.

Lord McFall of Alcluith (Lab): My Lords, more than a year ago I visited Drumchapel citizens advice bureau and the food bank there to see what the situation was. I have now looked at the updated figures. In a two-year period from 2012 to 2014, referrals for benefit changes and delays went up from 127 in 2012 to 1,192—an increase of almost 850%. Is it not time

for an independent investigation into what is now becoming a very worrying and scandalous situation in this country?

Lord Prior of Brampton: It is interesting that the use of food banks is increasing not just in England but in America, Canada, Germany and across Europe. The policy response of this Government is that we should focus on a strong economy, more jobs and the national living wage.

Lord Hylton (CB): My Lords, is it not paradoxical that, seven years after the world economic crisis, more and more people in this country are needing food banks? Will the Government look much more carefully than they have done up to now into the connection between benefit sanctions and food poverty?

Lord Prior of Brampton: It is interesting that the previous Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Ed Davey, said that there was no statistical link between the Government's benefit reforms and the provision of food banks—so I am not sure that there is that link. It is also a paradox that we have this issue with food banks at a time when obesity is one of the biggest threats to the future. It is a strange situation around the world when we have both a problem of obesity and an issue of nutrition.

Baroness Gardner of Parkes (Con): Will the Minister assure me that the decision in these matters will be up to hospitals themselves, as some hospitals have adequate space and are ideally situated for this purpose whereas others may not be? The Minister said that food banks already exist in some hospitals, which means that there is no bar from the Department of Health on having them. Food banks are doing very important work, but their locations should be assessed against where else would be more convenient. That point has been brought out in the debate. There are many aspects to consider, and it should be a free choice on the part of the hospital and the people who live in that area who may see that as the best place.

Lord Prior of Brampton: I thank my noble friend for that remark. It is entirely up to local organisations and local institutions, and those doing the work in Birmingham and Tameside are to be congratulated.

Lord Cashman (Lab): My Lords, I do not doubt the Minister's sincerity in his answers, but I point out that food banks result because people are going hungry. People are starving in this country and should not have to rely on such charity. Does he agree that obesity often occurs when people on very meagre budgets have to have the worst kind of food in order to feel satisfied?

Lord Prior of Brampton: The factors behind obesity and malnutrition are extremely complex. The all-party inquiry referred to complex and frequently overlapping factors. The work done by the University of Warwick found that there was no systematic evidence on drivers

of food aid in the UK—and the evidence was drawn not just from the UK but from the US, Canada and Germany.

The Archbishop of Canterbury: Does the Minister recognise that the comments at the time of the previous Government about there being no link between benefit changes and food banks was significantly challenged at the time and that our experience in Church of England, which is involved in the vast majority of food banks across the country, is that between 35% and 45% of people coming to get support from food banks report that the reason for running out of food is to do with changes to the benefit system and sanctions?

Lord Prior of Brampton: All I can do is repeat what I said before which is that, as Ed Davey said, there is no statistical link, in his view, between the Government's benefits reforms and the provision of food banks. I think that the issue is much more complex than the most reverend Primate is suggesting.

Identity Cards

Question

11.34 am

Asked by **Lord Campbell-Savours**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what further consideration they are giving to introducing national identity cards.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Lord Bates) (Con): My Lords, the Government have no plans to reintroduce identity cards for British citizens.

Lord Campbell-Savours (Lab): My Lords, I am sorry to hear that. Nearly all European countries now have national identity cards. Germany's latest card, which is highly secure, includes a digital photo, an electronic data function and biometric data, which can include a fingerprint. In these difficult circumstances, when identity is at the heart of our problems, should not all the political parties now reconsider their positions on the introduction of national identity cards? If other European countries can have confidence in their ID card systems, why cannot we do the same? Times are changing—the world is very different.

Lord Bates: The noble Lord will be aware that we have had this debate before. The decision that was taken to abolish the national identity register and identity cards, which had been introduced by the previous Labour Government, was done on two grounds: first, on cost, because it cost £85 million to run and nearly £1 billion was required to maintain the register; and secondly, in terms of effectiveness, because the very people whose identity we might want to have would be the last people in the queue to comply with the requirement for the ID card. That is not to say that we are not doing anything about that; we are simply saying that we have a different approach. We have passports and driving licences—84% of the population

[LORD BATES]

have passports and over 60% have driving licences—and all people who come from outside the EEA to live in the UK for a period in excess of six months are required to have a biometric permit to do so.

Lord Deben (Con): My Lords, with hindsight, would it not have been better to have corrected the faults in the Labour Party proposals and put them into operation so that now we would have a system which worked? Is it not odd that we are the only country in Europe that thinks that this system without identity cards is somehow superior? Should we not learn from others just occasionally?

Lord Bates: Of course we learn from others, and the reality is that we have a system of photographic ID—I have mentioned lots of types, such as biometric passports, but also general passports and driving licences, which we have in this country. At a time when our principal concern is national security, we have said that we choose to spend the investment that would be required to put in place a system of ID on better equipping our security forces and better securing our borders to ensure that we can keep people secure and safe.

Lord Reid of Cardowan (Lab): My Lords, I declare an interest as the Home Secretary who introduced ID cards. I say to the Minister, and through him to noble colleagues on the Cross Benches and the Liberal Benches, that I have always been aware and am still aware of the balance between privacy and security for the nation. However, I hope in the present circumstances, which have changed considerably over the last decade—not only as regards immigration and the introduction of digital services for individuals and citizens but particularly in regard to the national security and the protection of all of our citizens in counterterrorism and the assurance that we can give that to them—that the Government will reconsider their position on this before it is too late. I welcome the fact that the Government are not averse to U-turns, including very big ones, and I hope that they will reconsider on this one; no one will score any political points, because it is now a matter of national security.

Lord Bates: I hear the point the noble Lord makes, which of course I would accept if it was a question of effectiveness, but our view is that it was not going to be effective, because the very people you would want to catch would be the people who would not comply. That is the reason why spending the money on better security and surveillance, better use of intelligence, the investments in national security we have announced, the improvement to the funding of the police and cybersecurity is the right way to go at the present time.

Lord Roberts of Llandudno (LD): I welcome the Minister's statement that there will be no rethink of identity cards. Knee-jerk reactions often lead to massive expense and total inefficiency. We remember the personal interviews when people wanted to get passports—I do not know whether the Home Secretary who introduced this is in the Chamber today. That proved to be totally

wrong. Will the Minister confirm that in the first four years it was introduced 1.5 million interviews took place, of which only 12 were rejected, and when it was established, that there were—

Noble Lords: Question!

Lord Roberts of Llandudno: I will continue with my question. Can he confirm that there were 68 offices in the UK, of which 30 have been closed over the last few years? Can the Minister please tell us what the situation is with this personal interview for passports?

Lord Bates: A personal interview is required for all adults applying for a passport for the first time. It is an important deterrent element as well. One of the factors that is not recognised is that, in the numbers that the noble Lord quoted, there are more than 1,000 people each year who do not turn up for an interview when they are required to do so to support their passport application.

Noble Lords: My Lords—

The Lord Privy Seal (Baroness Stowell of Beeston) (Con): My Lords, I have only just arrived. It is the turn of the Cross Benches.

Baroness Butler-Sloss (CB): I thank the Leader of the House. I do not see why we should not try identity cards. Those of us who drive have to carry a driving licence around with us, otherwise there are always difficulties with the police if you get stopped. I really do not know why we should not see whether it actually works. It works in other countries and why, as the noble Lord, Lord Deben, said, should we not learn from other countries and try it here?

Lord Bates: I hear what the noble and learned Baroness says, but the reality is that we did try this. We had a live test of this and our conclusion was that it did not work; it did not tackle the problems that we wanted it to tackle, it was very expensive and there was no compliance from the very people that we wanted to be protected from.

Syria Question

11.41 am

Asked by *Baroness Helic*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what are the implications for the United Kingdom strategy in Syria of the shooting down of the Russian plane by Turkish forces.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns) (Con): My Lords, this incident is deeply concerning. The UK joins our NATO colleagues in supporting Turkey's right to defend its airspace and in calling for de-escalation. UK policy

on Syria remains to defeat ISIL and seek a political solution to the Syrian crisis, thereby eroding the threat of ISIL and reducing the flow of refugees from Syria. The Prime Minister is now outlining UK strategy in Syria and the Leader of the House will repeat that Statement shortly in this House.

Baroness Helic (Con): My Lords, I thank my noble friend for her answer. I realise that the Prime Minister is making a Statement, and I welcome the Government's determination to stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies in Syria. However, can the Minister tell the House whether there is any prospect of a stronger NATO presence in southern Turkey, particularly on the border with Syria, which seems to have been turned into a gateway for extremism, not only in terms of manpower but for supplies as well?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Lords, the UK believes that NATO has a key role in the south to improve partner resilience and reassure allies. Indeed, next week, NATO Foreign Ministers will discuss a new strategy for the south, including through its defence capacity-building initiatives and partnerships. The Prime Minister and the Secretary-General have said that the fight against ISIL must be full spectrum, with NATO playing a role. NATO-EU co-ordination is also vital.

Lord Wright of Richmond (CB): My Lords, there will no doubt be opportunities later this morning to discuss government strategy in Syria. But is the Minister in a position to comment on reports in today's press that the Russian air force has been dropping cluster bombs on the rebels? Are these the rebels the British Government support?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The noble Lord has rightly raised the question of the use of cluster bombs—and in the past, I believe, of chemical warfare—across the area by different groups. I have not seen the reports to which the noble Lord refers but I will certainly look into those. It is a matter of great concern that those who are seeking to defeat ISIL follow the normal international procedures.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire (LD): My Lords, we have an international coalition that is supposed to be focusing on ISIL. Are we in an active dialogue with our Turkish allies about the extent to which defeating ISIL rather than the Kurds is a main priority?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Lords, indeed we do. The Turks are a valued ally in the fight against ISIL/Daesh, and we have regular conversations with Turkey on the basis referred to by the noble Lord.

Lord West of Spithead (Lab): My Lords, I have asked a question before about in what forum we are discussing airspace co-ordination. It seems extraordinary that with such a complex air picture, with so many assets being used within limited airspace, there is not a proper forum where this is being fully discussed. When I asked this question last time, it did not seem that the UK was involved in that and I have real concerns for

our aircraft. Will the Minister confirm that a proper forum has now been established and that we are establishing proper airspace security?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Lords, the coalition has implemented safe separation measures for aircraft operating in Syria and keeps the issue under constant review. British aircraft are already flying combat missions over Iraq and reconnaissance missions over Syria. That includes overflying Turkish airspace by agreement with the Turkish Government and following long-standing practice among NATO allies, which ensures full transparency and communication at all times. I assure the noble Lord that all these missions are co-ordinated by the US-led coalition co-ordination centre.

Lord Dobbs (Con): My Lords, there are inevitably conflicting and competing claims about what actually happened. Can my noble friend cast any light on whether in fact that Russian jet was over Turkish territory? If so, for how long was it over Turkish territory? Is she able to tell us whether the Turks did indeed give adequate warning of their intention to shoot it down?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Lords, we support Turkey in the way in which it has presented the facts of the case. Turkey has said that the Russian plane was warned 10 times in five minutes before they shot at the plane, and the US military spokesperson has corroborated that. It is clear that the most important thing at this time is that the issue is de-escalated. As President Obama and the Prime Minister here have said, it is important that all sides consider carefully their relationship with each other.

Lord Ashdown of Norton-sub-Hamdon (LD): My Lords, I hope that the Minister will correct me if I am wrong, but is it not the case that the last Saudi Arabian plane to join the coalition over the battlefield was seen three months ago, in September, and the last Qatari plane nine months ago, in February? If we are to ask our pilots to go in, should we not be pressuring our allies to ensure that they do not pull theirs out?

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My Lords, it is important that all members of coalition play a strong role in whatever they may bring in the way of technical support and assistance, airpower or overflying with drones. It is a matter for command and control of the coalition to determine how best that effort is delivered.

Business of the House

Timing of Debates

11.47 am

Moved by Baroness Stowell of Beeston

That the debates on the motions in the names of Baroness Deech and Lord Crisp set down for today shall each be limited to 2½ hours.

Motion agreed.

Welfare Reform and Work Bill

Order of Consideration Motion

11.47 am

Moved by Baroness Evans of Bowes Park

That it be an instruction to the Committee of the Whole House to which the Welfare Reform and Work Bill has been committed that they consider the bill in the following order:

Clauses 11 to 12, Clauses 4 to 6, Clauses 13 to 15, Clauses 1 to 3, Clauses 7 to 10, Schedule 1, Clauses 16 to 25, Schedule 2, Clauses 26 to 32, Title.

Motion agreed.

Education and Adoption Bill

Membership Motion

11.47 am

Moved by Lord Nash

That the amendments for the Report stage be marshalled and considered in the following order:

Clauses 3 to 6, Clauses 13 to 18, Clauses 1 and 2, Clauses 7 to 12, Title.

Motion agreed.

Syria: Foreign Affairs Committee Report

Statement

11.48 am

Lord Bassam of Brighton (Lab): My Lords—

The Lord Privy Seal (Baroness Stowell of Beeston) (Con): Does the noble Lord want to speak before I have repeated the Statement?

Lord Bassam of Brighton: My Lords, I appreciate that this is a rather late request from the Dispatch Box, but there is a full Chamber today and I was wondering whether the noble Baroness would accede to the House having an extended period of questions for Back-Bench contributions.

The Lord Privy Seal (Baroness Stowell of Beeston) (Con): My Lords, I would normally hope to receive such a request before we got to this point in proceedings. Clearly, I do not want to deny the House the opportunity to ask questions, but we will have a debate on related matters next Thursday and we have had a debate on the strategic defence review earlier this week. As and when there is any further debate on this matter in the House of Commons, I would expect my noble friend the Chief Whip to schedule time for that. None the less, I will be happy to extend Back-Bench questions by just 10 minutes, so we will do 30 minutes for Back-Bench questions.

With the leave of the House I will now repeat a Statement made by my right honourable friend the Prime Minister in another place. The Statement is as follows.

“Mr Speaker, I said I would respond personally to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee report on extending British military operations to Syria. I have done so today, and copies of my response have been made available to every Member of the House.

The committee produced a comprehensive report which asked a series of important questions. I have tried to listen very carefully to the questions and views expressed by Members on all sides of the House, and I want to try to answer all the relevant questions today. There are different ways of putting them, but they boil down to this: why? Why us? Why now? Is what we are contemplating legal? Where are the ground troops to help us meet our objectives? What is the strategy that brings together everything we are doing, particularly in Syria? Is there an end to this conflict, and is there a plan for what follows?

Let me deal with each of these questions very directly. First, why? The reason for acting is the very direct threat that ISIL poses to our country and to our way of life. ISIL has attacked Ankara, Beirut and, of course, Paris, as well as the likely blowing up of a Russian plane with 224 people on board. It has already taken the lives of British hostages and inspired the worst terrorist attack against British people since 7/7, on the beaches of Tunisia. Crucially, it has repeatedly tried to attack us right here in Britain. In the last 12 months, our police and security services have disrupted no fewer than seven terrorist plots to attack the UK, every one of which was either linked to ISIL or inspired by its propaganda, so I am in no doubt that it is in our national interest for action to be taken to stop it—and stopping it means taking action in Syria because it is Raqqa that is its HQ.

But why us? My first responsibility as Prime Minister—and our first job in this House—is to keep the British people safe. We have the assets to do that, and we can significantly extend the capabilities of the international coalition forces. That is one reason why members of the international coalition, including President Obama and President Hollande have made it clear to me that they want Britain to stand with them in joining in air strikes in Syria as well as Iraq. These are our closest allies, and they want our help.

Partly, this is about our capabilities. As we are showing in Iraq, the RAF can carry out what is called ‘dynamic targeting’, where our pilots can strike the most difficult targets at rapid pace, and with extraordinary precision, and provide vital battle-winning close air support to local forces on the ground. We have the Brimstone precision missile system, which enables us to strike accurately with minimal collateral damage—something that even the Americans do not have. The RAPTOR pod on our Tornado aircraft has no rival, currently gathering 60% of the coalition’s entire tactical reconnaissance in Iraq, while also being equipped for strikes. In addition, our Reaper drones are providing up to 30% of the intelligence in Syria, but are not currently able to use their low-collateral high-precision

missile systems. We also have the proven ability to sustain our operations—not just for weeks, but if necessary for months into the future.

Of course we have these capabilities, but the most important answer to the question, ‘Why us?’, is even more fundamental. It is this: we should not be content with outsourcing our security to our allies. If we believe that action can help protect us, then, with our allies, we should be part of that action, not standing aside from it. From this moral point comes a fundamental question: if we will not act now, when our friend and ally, France, has been struck in this way, then our allies in the world can be forgiven for asking, ‘If not now, when?’.

That leads to the next question, ‘Why now?’. The first answer to that, of course, is the grave danger that ISIL poses to our security—a danger that has clearly intensified in recent weeks—but there are additional reasons why action now is so important. Look at what has changed—not just the attack in Paris, but the world has come together and agreed a UN Security Council resolution. There is a real political process underway. This could lead to a new Government in Syria, with whom we can work to defeat ISIL for good, but as I explained to the House yesterday, we cannot wait for that to be complete before we begin acting to degrade ISIL and reducing its capability to attack us.

Let us be clear about the military objectives that we are pursuing. Yes, we want to defeat the terrorists by dismantling their networks, stopping their funding, targeting their training camps and taking out those plotting terrorist attacks against the UK, but there is a broader objective. For as long as ISIL can peddle the myth of a so-called caliphate in Iraq and Syria, it will be a rallying call for Islamist extremists all around the world. That makes us less safe. Just as we have reduced the scale and size of that so-called caliphate in Iraq—increasingly pushing it out of Iraq—so we need to do the same thing in Syria.

Indeed, another reason for action now is that the success in Iraq in squeezing the so-called caliphate is put at risk by our failure to act in Syria. This border is not recognised by ISIL and we seriously hamper our efforts if we stop acting when we reach the Syrian border. So when we come to the question, ‘Why now?’, we have to ask ourselves whether the risks of inaction are greater than the risks of taking action. Every day we fail to act is a day when ISIL can grow stronger and more plots can be undertaken. That is why all the advice that I have received—the military advice, the diplomatic advice and the security advice—all says yes, the risks of inaction are greater.

Some have asked specifically whether taking action could make the UK more of a target for ISIL attacks. Let me tell the House that the judgment of the director-general of the Security Service and the chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee is that the UK is already in the top tier of countries that ISIL is targeting. I am clear that the only way to deal with that reality is to address the threat we face and to do so now.

Let me turn to the question of legality. It is a long-standing constitutional convention that we do not publish our formal legal advice, but the document

I have published today shows in some detail the clear legal basis for military action against ISIL in Syria. It is founded on the right of self-defence as recognised in Article 51 of the UN charter. The right to self-defence may be exercised individually where it is necessary to the UK’s own defence and, of course, collectively in the defence of our friends and allies.

The main basis of the global coalition’s action against ISIL in Syria is the collective self-defence of Iraq. Iraq has a legitimate Government, one that we support and help. There is a solid basis of evidence on which to conclude, first, that there is a direct link between the presence and activities of ISIL in Syria and its ongoing attack on Iraq, and, secondly, that the Assad regime is unwilling and/or unable to take the action necessary to prevent ISIL’s continuing attack on Iraq—or, indeed, attacks on us. It is also clear that ISIL’s campaign against the UK and our allies has reached the level of an ‘armed attack’, such that force may lawfully be used in self-defence to prevent further atrocities being committed by ISIL.

This is further underscored by the unanimous adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2249. We should be clear about what this resolution means and what it says. The whole world came together, including all five members of the Security Council, to agree this resolution unanimously. The resolution states that ISIL,

‘constitutes a global and unprecedented threat to international peace and security’.

It calls for member states to take ‘all necessary measures’ to prevent and suppress terrorist acts committed specifically by ISIL, and to,

‘eradicate the safe haven they have established over significant parts of Iraq and Syria’.

Turning to the question of which ground forces will assist us, in Iraq the answer is clear. We have the Iraqi security forces and the Kurdish Peshmerga. In Syria, the situation is more complex, but as the report I am publishing today shows, we believe there are around 70,000 Syrian opposition fighters, principally of the Free Syrian Army, who do not belong to extremist groups and with whom we can co-ordinate attacks on ISIL.

In addition, there are the Kurdish armed groups who have also shown themselves capable of taking territory, holding territory and administering it and, crucially, relieving the suffering that the civilian population had endured under ISIL control. The Syrian Kurds have successfully defended Kurdish areas in northern Syria and have retaken territory around the city of Kobane. Moderate armed Sunni Arabs have proved capable of defending territory north of Aleppo, and stopped ISIL’s attempts to capture the main humanitarian border crossing with Turkey and sweep into Idlib province. In the south of Syria, the Southern Front of the Free Syrian Army has consolidated its control over significant areas and has worked to prevent terrorists from operating.

The people I talked about are ground troops. They need our help; when they get it, they succeed, so we should do more to help from the air. But those who ask questions about ground troops are right to do so. The full answer cannot be achieved until there is a new Syrian Government who represent all the Syrian people:

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not just Sunni, Shia and Alawite, but Christian, Druze and others. It is this new Government who will be the natural partners for our forces in defeating ISIL for good. We cannot defeat ISIL simply from the air, or purely with military action alone. It requires a full political settlement. The question is: can we wait for that settlement before we take action? Again, my answer is no, we cannot.

On the question about whether this is part of an overall strategy, the answer is yes. Our approach has four pillars. First, our counterextremism strategy means we have a comprehensive plan to prevent and foil plots at home, and also to address the poisonous extremist ideology that is the root cause of the threat we face. Second is our support for the diplomatic and political process. We should be clear about this process. Many in this House rightly said how vital it is to have all the key regional players around the table, including Iran and Russia. We are now seeing Iran and Saudi Arabia sitting down around the same table as America and Russia, as well as France, Turkey and Britain, working towards the transition to a new Government in Syria.

The third pillar is the military action I am describing to degrade ISIL and reduce the threat it poses; it is working in Iraq, and I believe it can work in Syria.

The fourth pillar is immediate humanitarian support and longer-term stabilisation. Of course, the House has heard many times that Britain has so far given more than £1.1 billion—by far the largest commitment of any European country, and second only to the United States of America. This is helping to reduce the need for Syrians to attempt the perilous journey to Europe. The donor conference that I am hosting in February, together with Germany, Kuwait, Norway and the UN, will help further.

However, the House is rightly also asking more questions about whether there will be a proper post-conflict reconstruction effort to support a new Syrian Government when they emerge. Britain's answer to that question is absolutely yes. I can tell the House that Britain would be prepared to contribute at least another £1 billion for this task.

All these elements—counterterrorism, political and diplomatic, military and humanitarian—need to happen together to achieve a long-term solution in Syria. We know that peace is a process, not an event. I am clear that it cannot be achieved through a military assault on ISIL alone; it also requires the removal of Assad through a political transition. But I am also clear about the sequencing that needs to take place. This is an ISIL-first strategy.

What of the end goal? The initial objective is to damage ISIL and reduce its capability to do us harm, and I believe that this can in time lead to its eradication. No one predicted its rise and we should not accept that it is somehow impossible to bring it to an end. It is not what the people of Iraq and Syria want; it does not represent the true religion of Islam; and it is losing ground in Iraq, following losses in Sinjar and Baiji.

We are not naive about the complexity of the task. It will require patience and persistence, and our work will not be complete until we have reached our true end goal, which is having Governments in both Iraq

and Syria who can command the confidence of all their peoples. In Syria, that ultimately means a Government without Assad. As Ban Ki-moon has said, 'A missile can kill a terrorist; but only good governance can kill terrorism'. This applies so clearly to both Iraq and Syria.

As we discuss all these things, people also want to know that we have learnt the lessons of previous conflicts. Whatever anyone thought of the Iraq war, terrible mistakes were made in its aftermath in dismantling the state and the institutions of that country, and we must never make those mistakes again. The political process in Syria will, in time, deliver new leadership and it is that transition we must support. We are not in the business of dismantling the Syrian state or its institutions.

In Libya, the state and its institutions had been hollowed out after 40 years of dictatorship. When the dictatorship went, the institutions rapidly collapsed. But the big difference between Libya and Syria is that in Syria this time we have firm international commitment from all the backers of a future Syrian Government around the table at the Vienna talks. The commitment is clear: to preserve and develop the state in Syria and allow a new representative Government to govern for all their people.

I have attempted to answer the main questions: why? Why now? Why us? Is it legal? What are the ground forces? Is there a strategy? What is the end point and the plan for reconstruction? But I know that this is a highly complex situation and that Members on all sides will have other questions, which I look forward to trying to answer this morning.

One will be about the confused and confusing situation in Syria with regard to Russia's intervention. Let me reassure the House that the American-led combined air operations centre has a memorandum of understanding with the Russians. This enables daily contact and pragmatic military planning to ensure the safety of all coalition forces, and this would include our brave RAF pilots.

Another question will be about whether we are taking sides in a Sunni versus Shia conflict. This is simply not the case. Yes, ISIL is a predominantly Sunni organisation, but it is killing Shia and Sunnis alike. Our vision for the future of Syria, as with Iraq, is not a sectarian entity but one governed in the interests of all its people. So we wholeheartedly welcome the presence of states with both Sunni and Shia majorities at the Vienna talks, and their support for international action against both ISIL and towards a diplomatic solution in Syria.

The House will also want to know what we are doing about the financing of ISIL. The document sets this out. It includes intercepting smugglers, sealing borders and enforcing sanctions to stop people trading with ISIL. But, ultimately, ISIL is able to generate income through its control of territory, so while we are working with international partners to squeeze the finances wherever we can, it is the rolling back of ISIL's territory which will ultimately cut off its finances.

Two of the most complex questions in an undoubtedly complex situation are these. First, will acting against ISIL in Syria help to bring about transition? I believe

that the answer is yes, not least because there cannot be genuine transition without maintaining the territorial integrity of Syria. ISIL denies this integrity. Crucially, destroying ISIL helps the moderate forces, and those moderate forces will be crucial to Syria's future. Secondly, does our view that Assad must go help in the fight against ISIL or, as some claim, does this confuse the picture? The expert advice I have could not be clearer: we will not beat ISIL if we waiver in our view that ultimately Assad must go. We cannot win over majority Sunni opinion, which is vital for the long-term stability of Syria, if we suddenly change our position.

In the end it comes back to the one main question: should we take action? All those who say that ultimately we need a diplomatic solution and a transition to a new Government in Syria are right. Working with a new, representative Government is the way to eradicate ISIL in Syria in the long term, but can we wait for that to happen before we take military action? I say we cannot.

Let me be clear: there will not be a vote in this House unless there is a clear majority for action, because we will not hand a publicity coup to ISIL. I am clear that any Motion we bring before this House will explicitly recognise that military action is not the whole answer. Proud as I am of our incredible service men and women, I will not pretend or overstate the significance of our potential contribution. I will not understate the complexity of this issue, nor the risks that are inevitably involved in any military action, but we face a fundamental threat to our security. We cannot wait for a political transition. We have to hit these terrorists in their heartlands right now. We must not shirk our responsibility for security or hand it to others.

Throughout our history, the United Kingdom has stood up to defend our values and our way of life. We can, and must, do so again. I commend this Statement to the House”.

My Lords, that concludes the Statement.

12.11 pm

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab): My Lords, we are grateful to the Leader for repeating the Prime Minister's Statement, and welcome the publication of the Prime Minister's response to the Select Committee report. Both are necessary and detailed, and cover a range of issues which all Members of your Lordships' House will wish to consider and reflect on.

The first duty of any Government is the safety, security and well-being of their citizens. My party does not take an isolationist or non-interventionist position. We have never been reluctant to use force when it has been deemed necessary. I understand and appreciate how difficult it is when making such judgments to ensure that decisions are right and fair and that actions are justified.

Our interventions as the Labour Government in 1999 to protect Muslim Kosovar Albanians from genocide by Milosevic, and in Macedonia in 2001, were central and crucial to the protection of citizens and supporting peace. We used military action in Sierra Leone to bring order and stability, and we still have British

citizens there playing a central role in building and maintaining that stability. We have also provided military support in times of humanitarian crisis; for example, fighting Ebola in West Africa.

Your Lordships' House, Parliament as a whole and, indeed, the general public are convinced of the evil and brutality of ISIL. They are very aware of and well informed of the atrocities. Paris brought it so close to home: not only is ISIL willing to cause death, terror and mayhem—and apparently rejoicing in that—but it has the capacity to do so. If anyone doubts that such attacks will continue, they have only to look at the videos and messages posted online as recently as last night: they are chilling, they are frightening and they must increase our determination to protect our citizens.

Our efforts must focus on a comprehensive strategy to tackle not just the actions of ISIL but the environment which encourages such views to develop, and we have to support the overwhelming majority of Muslims here in the UK who themselves challenge and reject such a violent interpretation of their religion and culture. That is why any strategy to defeat ISIL has to be so much more than military action alone.

As we know, the UK is already engaged militarily, providing intelligence and logistical support to our allies in Syria who are engaged in flying missions. We are directly involved in targeted military bombing in Iraq, and we must judge any proposed extension of UK involvement against the wider support it can gain, against the contribution it will make to the chances of success and against the additional capacity it will create. Proposals that are brought forward must also be judged against how they can contribute to the future transition to peace and stability and to the protection and security of our citizens in the UK.

There are also broader issues. There is not just a war to be won; there is also a peace to be won. The issues raised by the Foreign Affairs Committee focus on extending military operations, and the committee identified seven challenges to the Government that should be addressed before the Prime Minister asks the House of Commons to consider this matter and vote. When the report was published a month ago, the Foreign Affairs Committee was not convinced that the Government would be able to provide convincing answers to the points raised. Of course, we will all want to consider with care the Prime Minister's answers and the committee's response.

The conflict in the region is not straightforward. Indeed, as the noble Baroness said, it is highly complex. The civil war in Syria has meant not just the physical collapse of a country but the absolute collapse of society. The skills of, and commitment to peace by, those who have been forced to leave their homeland and become refugees will be needed to build the future. So when the extension of air strikes on strategic targets in Syria is considered, it must be as part of a political, diplomatic, humanitarian and economic strategy. We will seek reassurances that the Government fully understand that, and that they will be engaged in and committed to working closely with countries across the region towards the reconstruction and a peace process. The Vienna talks are vital. Whatever the

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difficulties, that framework and the bringing together of so many countries provides some movement towards political and diplomatic progress.

I have a few questions for the noble Baroness that I hope she will be able to address. Can she say whether any assessment has been made of the direct threat to British citizens from ISIL here in the UK? Can she be clear about the additional capacity that British participation would bring militarily, given the support that is already being provided? Has any assessment been made of the impact of UK involvement on the success of the objectives of military engagement? Can she also say whether the service Chiefs of Staff have been able to participate directly in the decision-making process by providing expert strategic advice? The noble Baroness will understand the concerns about any possible unintended consequences of increased military action, particularly civilian casualties. Therefore, can she also say something about the impact of military action in terms of civilian casualties in Iraq as a result of UK action?

The Government's response says that, "a political solution to the Syria conflict", is "finally a realistic prospect" following the establishment of the International Syria Support Group and the Vienna talks. This is going to be a difficult process. The government response rightly states that this issue must not be reduced to a choice between Assad on the one side and ISIL on the other. In repeating the Statement, the noble Baroness was clear about the Government's opposition to Assad. Can she say something more about the longer-term future of Assad and about how the British Government can achieve our objectives, given the atrocities for which Assad and his Government are responsible? I know where the Government stand on this but I am thinking particularly of how we think we can achieve the objective of removing Assad. Finally, can she say something further about the legal basis for military action following the United Nations Security Council meeting on 20 November?

Today's Statement will obviously be considered carefully over the coming days before the Prime Minister brings any Motion before the other place. These are not issues on which your Lordships' House has a vote, but I hope that—and put it to the noble Baroness that—given the military, diplomatic, political and humanitarian experience and wisdom in this House, we will have an opportunity for an early debate in addition to the scheduled debate she referred to. I urge the Prime Minister to consult those in this House whose expertise will be of great value.

Lord Wallace of Tankerness (LD): My Lords, I join the noble Baroness the Leader of the Opposition in thanking the Leader of the House for repeating the Prime Minister's Statement, and thank her also for early sight of the Prime Minister's response to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee.

From these Benches we unequivocally condemn atrocities perpetrated by ISIL, be they in Paris, Ankara, Sharm el-Sheikh, Tunisia or Beirut, or indeed the day-in, day-out victimisation of people in the Middle East. We have also recognised that in defeating an

enemy like ISIL the use of military force will be necessary, and indeed we have supported air strikes in Iraq. But the use of lethal force should never be used simply as a gesture—not even a symbolic gesture. It has to have effect. And to have effect, it must surely be part of a wider strategy, not least on the diplomatic front. So the challenge is not whether the Government have made a case to justify bombing but whether they have a strategy to bring stability to the region and lay the foundations for a peaceful future for Syria.

We have consistently called for a diplomatic effort to put together a wider coalition, including others who have an interest in the defeat of jihadism, notably Russia and Iran. While it is understandable, it is not right either to have a knee-jerk reaction to engage in air strikes in Syria or to avoid being involved in another conflict in the Middle East at all costs. Given the gravity of the question that we are being asked, we will look carefully at the Government's response to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee and take a considered response.

In doing so, we will apply five tests to what the Prime Minister has said. First, is military intervention legal? In fairness, the response that we have had today is reassuring on that point. Secondly, is there a wider diplomatic framework, including efforts towards a no-bomb zone to protect civilians? Thirdly, will the UK lead a concerted international effort to stop the funding of jihadi groups within the region? Fourthly, is there a post-ISIL plan for Syria and Iraq? Fifthly, what is the Government's plan domestically? I would be grateful if the Leader of the House could provide the House with further details. What is the Government's plan for post-conflict reconstruction, especially in terms of the vacuum that would inevitably be created in an immediate post-ISIL Syria? What discussions are the Government having with Turkey about its contribution to the fight against ISIL? Can we be assured that we fully share each other's objectives?

The document before us helpfully discusses the precision with which on a number of occasions our own military capabilities can add to the current actions. However, as we have seen from recent TV reports, some of those already engaged in the region do not act with the same kind of restraint and precision as we can and would. So if we were to become engaged in military action, what responsibility would we have for the actions of other members of the coalition? Perhaps more importantly, what influence could we bring to bear on other members of the coalition with regard to the restraint and precision with which they would take action?

What pressure is being put on our coalition partners in the Gulf, particularly Saudi Arabia and Qatar, to rejoin the air strikes, as my noble friend Lord Ashdown asked at Questions? They appear not to have been involved in them for some months. What are the Government doing to ensure that they play their part? I am sure that we agree that ISIL would like nothing better than to be able to frame a narrative that the conflict was one between the crusading West and them as defenders of Islam. We must give the lie to that, and that requires the evident and active involvement of coalition partners from the region itself.

Further, what efforts are being made to stop the funding and supply of resources to ISIL? Do the Government have confidence that some of our coalition partners are doing enough within their own countries to stop the funding of ISIL and other extremist groups? The strategy before us does not seem to address that question. What further steps do the Government intend to take into investigating foreign funding and support of extremist and terrorist groups at home in the United Kingdom?

It is disappointing that the document says nothing about trying to have a no-bomb zone, which would help the refugee and humanitarian situation in the region and beyond. Humanitarian aid alone, while important, cannot stop the flows of people, and there is huge pressure on Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, which cannot maintain the numbers in refugee camps within their borders.

Finally, since we cannot separate the domestic and international aspects of the fight against ISIL, will the Leader of the House tell us what steps the Government are taking or intend to take to ensure that, in the event of action, the British Muslim population fully understand and are supportive of the actions that the Government propose?

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: My Lords, I am grateful to the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, and the noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace, for their comments. As the Statement and their contributions have reflected, we all understand that this is a very serious matter and are dealing with it in a very careful, measured and constructive way. I am grateful for their contributions in that regard. In responding to the points that have been raised, I would say in the first instance that the Prime Minister has replied personally to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee report this morning. It is a comprehensive reply. I recognise that noble Lords will not yet have had an opportunity to study that document properly, but the Prime Minister intends it to be one for all parliamentarians to reflect on and consider. I think that the House will see answers in that document to many of the questions raised by the noble Baroness and the noble and learned Lord this morning.

The noble Baroness asked directly about having a debate in this House, should the Prime Minister decide that he wanted to bring the question to the House of Commons. Clearly, I would want to ensure that we schedule a debate in this House and would expect, in discussion with my noble friend the Chief Whip, us to follow a similar arrangement to that in previous years. We would have a debate in this House at the same time, or on the same day, that the House of Commons was debating this matter. As noble Lords will know, this House is not invited to divide on such a matter.

The noble Baroness, Lady Smith, and the noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace, both asked about the legal basis of the proposed action outlined in the Statement. The Statement was clear that we have the ability, through the respective existing UN charters, to take action on the basis of self-defence—both in our own self-defence and collective self-defence of Iraq. But the comprehensive UN resolution passed

last week, which urged all countries to take the necessary action to defeat ISIL, gives further resounding support for that action.

The noble Baroness asked for more information about the direct threat to UK citizens from ISIL and what assessment there has been of that threat. I would point out to her that, as she knows, there has been an attack on British tourists recently. There has also been evidence of imminent attacks in the UK, which our security services have been successful in thwarting. The noble Baroness will recall that, only in September, I came to the House and repeated the Prime Minister's Statement when we took action on one of the British terrorists who was based in Syria. We had clear evidence that an attack was imminent on UK territory, which was why we took that action.

The noble Baroness asked what additional contribution the UK would make to the effort in Syria. Clearly, we have equipment which is not available to other coalition partners. This equipment is not just in addition to what they have available but brings an extra degree of precision and accuracy to targeting. That is why the coalition partners are very keen that we join their action in Syria. She also asked what the chance of success was. I believe absolutely that there is evidence of success. So far, what has been happening in Syria is that the coalition partners have been able, with their air support, to give the cover necessary to the moderate opposition fighters who are against Assad to regain territory. We think that, with greater effort, they will make more progress. Indeed, we have to help them make progress, because we need to achieve stability in Syria so that the country has a chance of a Government who will govern for all its people.

The noble Baroness asked whether the military chiefs had been consulted and involved. Of course, the Chief of the Defence Staff, the Chief of the Air Staff and many other key military figures have been properly consulted in the process of putting together the Government's strategy. She asked about civilian casualties in Iraq. So far, in more than a year of strikes against ISIL targets in Iraq, there have been no reports of civilian casualties resulting from UK air operations. As I have already said, the equipment that we have available to us is a very important part of ensuring that we minimise civilian casualties. She asked about the long-term future of Assad and how we will achieve stability in Syria with a new Government that governs for all its people. This is part of our strategy. The diplomatic and political effort has restarted, via the talks in Vienna that the Foreign Secretary attended recently and through all the various different diplomatic channels. We are supporting the UN envoy, who is pursuing the same agenda. There is a concerted effort, and now more than ever, post the UN resolution on Friday, there is the will among all countries to see stability in the region. It is clearly recognised that that will mean a Government who can govern for all Syria's people.

The noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace, asked about discussions with Turkey and their objectives. Turkey is very much part of the international diplomatic effort and was part of the recent talks in Vienna. He asked also about the clarity and precision of other

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partners and what influence we could bring to bear to ensure that they, too, approach this objective in the same way that we do. This is about working together in a coalition partnership to defeat ISIL and recognising that we must achieve that aim with minimum civilian casualties. As he knows, and as the Prime Minister said in this Statement, Russia has been targeting the moderate opposition to Assad rather than ISIL. We see signs now of it shifting its approach and recognising that it, too, is under threat of attack from ISIL. As the PM said not so long ago, the gap between us and Russia as far as Assad is concerned remains but is growing narrower all the time.

As for the neighbouring countries among our coalition partners rejoining air strikes and playing their part, one of the benefits of the recent United Nations resolution which all countries signed up to and the restarting of diplomatic and political talks is that that will bring much more effort and influence to ensuring that all the neighbouring countries play their part. However, it is worth saying that they are already playing an active part and contributing extensively. Some of those neighbouring countries are providing a huge amount of support just by giving a place of refuge to all the people who are being attacked and fleeing both ISIL and Assad.

The noble and learned Lord asked about the funding and supply of terrorist groups. We were cosignatories to the resolution that the funding of terrorist groups had to stop. We continue to apply pressure on that and are very much behind the sanctions regime that is in place to apply if there is any evidence of that objective being thwarted.

Overall, both the noble and learned Lord and the noble Baroness raised some very important questions. I hope that I have been able, through both repeating the Prime Minister's Statement and publishing his reply to the Foreign Affairs Committee today, to provide comprehensive answers to all those points. I hope that the House will take the time to consider and reflect on those documents in the next few days.

12.35 pm

Lord Spicer (Con): Are the Russians showing any willingness to become involved in aircraft co-ordination over Syria?

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: Yes, there is co-ordination in place.

The Archbishop of Canterbury: I thank the Leader of the House for the repetition of the Statement, and particularly the publication of the Foreign Affairs Committee report, and welcome the seriousness of the emphasis in both the Statement and the report on a comprehensive approach—the seriousness of military action but also the integration of soft and hard power, support for jobs, education, family and community life and stability, and of communities flourishing in the neighbouring countries, which comes out very strongly. The test will obviously be the total mobilisation of effort in a focused way that recognises the long-term

needs of security for indigenous populations, particularly the Christian populations, which are being harried out of the area.

For the first time in almost 300 years, we are facing a conflict that has a distinct theological and religious element which we have not faced before. Recent studies—there is a particularly authoritative one in which I should declare an interest because it was partly written by one of my children, who is interested in the subject—demonstrate the theological basis of the extremist groups behind jihadist thinking. Do the Government realise that, in facing this conflict, there must be an ideological response that is not only national in dealing with the threat of extremism here, but global in challenging the doctrines that draw so many people to support ISIS internationally? What steps are they proposing to take to put together the conflict at the ideological and theological level, as well as the humanitarian and military levels?

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: The most reverend Primate raises an important point about ideology being an important element to us combating Islamist extremism. The Statement gives an indication of the comprehensive way in which we are approaching combating this huge threat.

On the specifics of the ideological approach, here in the UK, we have the extremism strategy, which is directed at addressing the risks associated with people here, but internationally we are doing quite a lot, taking the lead to address matters within the internet industry. We have a very effective approach on that. At a conference only about a week ago in Qatar, the UK was seen very much as a leader in bringing together all the respective players on that issue. The UK is hosting the coalition communications cell, which is an effort to address the communications aspects and drive a new narrative counter to that coming out of ISIL, and is a better way for people to understand the alternative to what it is proposing.

Lord Stirrup (CB): My Lords, I welcome the Statement the Leader repeated and the additional capabilities that she explained the UK will be able to employ against ISIL in Syria. However, would she agree that the worst possible argument for inaction is that other people are already doing plenty of things? It is one thing to believe that military action is counterproductive; but to believe that it is necessary for our own security, and then to suggest that we should not employ that military capability because others already are is not only wrong but shameful. The noble Baroness talked about precision weapons. Those go where they are pointed, but they must be pointed at the right thing at the right time. Could she assure the House that, should military action be taken against ISIL in Syria, the necessary specialist personnel will be deployed on the ground to make sure that those weapons are used properly and to best effect?

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: I could not agree more with the noble and gallant Lord on his point about us not doing anything because others are. We cannot shirk our responsibility here. We are under threat; we

see this ISIL force as a direct threat to our own way of life. How can we possibly hand over responsibility for that to other people? We do not think we should do that whatsoever. On weapons, the noble and gallant Lord is absolutely right: clearly, they need to be directed at the right targets. On the ground force issue, we are clear that this is not for UK ground forces; it is for the ground forces currently operating in Syria. We want to support them. We see that as a key difference and a lesson we have learnt from recent military interventions.

Lord Davies of Stamford (Lab): My Lords, it cannot make sense to prevent the RAF from taking out targets on the Syrian side of the border that it can identify or from playing a full part in the coalition. I thoroughly support the Government in seeking to remove that anomaly now. Can we have an assurance that the intention is to improve our effectiveness against Daesh and not to pursue the Government's vendetta against Bashar al-Assad? It cannot make the slightest sense while we are engaged in an involuntary and unavoidable war against Daesh—which of course we must win—to fight on the same territory another entirely voluntary war against one party in the Syrian civil war. The Government's prediction that the Bashar al-Assad regime was about to collapse—made consistently for three years now, and which I assume was part of the basis of their policy—has proven completely wrong. I spent last weekend in Damascus and was very struck by both the health of the economy and the resolve and morale of the regime. I fear that the Government up till now have been very misconceived in their double approach, and hope that they will now be able to concentrate on the real enemy: Daesh.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: As I made clear in the Statement, this is about ISIL first. Militarily, we propose to take action in Syria alongside the action already being taken in Iraq because we cannot stop at a border that our enemy does not recognise. At the same time, we must also achieve a political settlement in Syria that will provide for stable government in future and in which al-Assad will not be able to play a part, because he will not provide the stability that is the long-term solution for eradicating ISIL.

Lord Ashdown of Norton-sub-Hamdon (LD): My Lords, I thank the Leader for what is, I am sure the House will recognise, by any standards a very substantive Statement, and particularly for her understanding that it will take a little time for us to digest and study this. I am grateful for both those things. The new element here is the UN Security Council resolution, which seems, as my noble and learned friend said, to provide a pretty clear case for legality. Secondly, there is the diplomatic track at last being followed—not before time, some might imagine.

May I test the Leader a little on the ambitions of the Vienna talks by drawing a parallel? The Dayton agreement that stopped what was a terrible sectarian war was an international treaty drawn up to include neighbours across the religious divide and underpinned by the great powers in guarantor fashion. It provided a framework for military action and for the peace that followed. Is that the model the Government have in mind for Vienna? If it is, then I strongly support that.

The Dayton agreement produced a very messy outcome, and whatever outcome, whatever peace we achieve in Syria—God help us, I hope we do—will be even messier. This will not be a comfortable peace; it will be a fractured peace and the very best we will be able to say of it is that, fractured, uncertain and unsatisfying as it is, it is better than continuing this terrible war. If that is the case, that is good enough for me.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: I am grateful to the noble Lord. I can tell him and other noble Lords that there are clearly differences between some of those involved in the Vienna talks—I mentioned that Russia is involved and there are some differences between us—but on 14 November they agreed a timeframe for political negotiations to begin by the end of the year, for a transitional government to be in place within six months and for a new constitution and free and fair elections within 18 months. The key thing everybody is signed up to is that a government in Syria—like a government in Iraq or, indeed, anywhere—must govern for all the people and provide the stability that is necessary for all those who live there.

Lord King of Bridgwater (Con): May I tell my noble friend how impressed I am by the approach the Government have taken in response to the Foreign Affairs Committee report? The thoroughness is, I have to say, in stark contrast to the previous occasion, at the time of the chemical weapons concerns, when bombing was suggested. Then, we were to debate the issue on Thursday and bomb on Friday. I have listened to the exchanges in the Commons, and the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Crispin Blunt, speaking in a personal capacity, has indicated that he believes the Government have answered the questions that the committee very sensibly asked.

There is one weakness in the Government's position, which is inevitable. Arguments are centring on the existence and substantial nature of the ground troops, but the reality is that we have to deal with where we are. The hope is that if there is an effective air campaign, co-ordinated with the existing total allied commitment, we may see rather more troops appearing on the ground than are presently willing to show themselves.

Any of us who have had any dealings with tackling the challenges of terrorism know that at the back of it all is money. What I welcome in the allies' recent efforts is the attack on the oil supplies—the source of income. There is no doubt that ISIL has been very well funded up to now. Resources; weapons production; weapons support, enabling its people to travel round and cause terrorist outrages in various places—all that takes money. I welcome the mention in the Statement of the steps now being taken, particularly accurate targeting in the air campaign, to tackle the economic forces that are keeping ISIL alive. I support that very much.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: I am grateful to my noble friend for providing us with an update on how the Statement is being welcomed in the other place. We estimate that there is a ground force of about

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70,000 troops in Syria who are fighting ISIL, and who would make up a moderate opposition to Assad. These troops are having some success. They have regained territory, and where they have done so they are able to administer those areas. We are already providing non-military support, trying to maintain the civic society in Syria which is so important to long-term stability. My noble friend is absolutely right about the attacks on the economic resources that ISIL relies on—that is where we have to continue to focus a lot of our energy.

Lord Wright of Richmond (CB): I note that the Statement says that diplomatic advice has been received that inaction is more dangerous than action, but how much action is taking place now in this very dangerous situation with other actors in the Syrian field? How much diplomatic contact do we have day-to-day with the Russians, the Iranians and, most particularly—and I am afraid the answer to this must be none—the Syrian Government? After all, it is their territory on which we are talking about military action.

I have two other quick questions. What diplomatic efforts are we or our American allies making to persuade the Saudi Government to withhold any further financial or material support from their allies in ISIS? And do we seriously still regard the so-called Syrian Free Army as a credible replacement for the secular Syrian regime in Damascus? I think we should all be very grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Davies, for having given us a very rare picture of what life is like in Damascus now.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: On the noble Lord's first point about financial support for the terrorists, I can be absolutely clear that we are very clear in our requests to our partners to withhold any kind of financial support from terrorist groups. The reason why I can be clear and confident with him is that we now have in place resolutions that prevent this happening—and there is no evidence of this coming from Governments, from partners. We are urging our partners, the neighbouring countries in the area, to apply their efforts to make sure that individuals in those countries do not provide financial support to terrorist groups.

The Free Syrian Army is being effective on the ground. We believe that it will continue to increase its effectiveness with greater support from the air.

Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean (Lab): My Lords, the Statement says that we are now seeing Iran and Saudi Arabia sitting down at the same table as Russia, America, France, Turkey and Britain. These are not easy bedfellows. Many of these different parts of the coalition have long-standing, real, substantive difficulties with each other. Page 8 of the Statement says that the full answer cannot be achieved until there is a new Syrian Government that represents all the Syrian people, not just Sunnis, Shias and Alawites, but Christians and Druze, but how much is that fundamental point made in the Statement accepted by all the people sitting around the table? That is a crucial point not

just in going into a conflict but in coming out of it, as the Statement makes clear later. I think we all agree that the aftermath in Iraq saw the appalling dismantling of the institutions. That has to be agreed, and understandings have to be reached before any real fighting gets under way in the way that the Statement anticipates.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: We are very clear that a stable Government in Syria is an essential part of the long-term eradication of ISIL. Ensuring that is at the heart of the talks in Vienna. The Statement says that there are some differences, which Prime Minister has acknowledged. We are working to achieve full and clear agreement on that—and that is what we will pursue, because we know it is essential to long-term success.

Lord Lee of Trafford (LD): Will the Leader of the House tell us whether the Government have made RAF Akrotiri available to the French air force? If we have, are we not to all intents and purposes already involved in the military campaign?

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: We have certainly offered RAF Akrotiri to the French Government. I am afraid that I do not have any information beyond that, but I will see if I can provide anything further to the noble Lord in writing.

Lord Deben (Con): As one of the 16 Members of Parliament who voted against the Iraq war and defied a three-line Whip, I point out to my noble friend that this situation is wholly different from that very foolish occurrence. In this situation we ought to support our allies, and to accept that we are involved and that our people are in fact threatened. The Prime Minister's Statement should gain the support of all of us.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: I am very grateful to my noble friend for his comments, particularly because of the remarks he prefaced them with about his views on the war in Iraq.

Lord Dobbs (Con): My Lords, may I nudge my noble friend very gently on this issue of the position of Assad, which has come up in many comments this morning? Up to this point, the British Government have been absolutely clear that this is black and white and that they will not under any circumstances talk to Assad. Yet in this search for peace and stability in Syria, diplomatic solutions occasionally require us to get our hands dirty. I listened very carefully to the Statement this morning, which said that we are, “working towards the transition to a new government in Syria”, and, “ultimately Assad must go”.

That sounded to me as if we were being rather more flexible on the matter of talking with Assad. If that is the case, I suggest to my noble friend that many of us would welcome that flexibility.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: My Lords, I must be absolutely clear that ultimately, Assad cannot be a part of Syria's future, because the Syrian people will never accept his rule. That is at the heart of this. When we talk about good governance—a theme I have returned to, having repeated a couple of Statements recently—we are saying that the people who run that Government have to command the confidence of the people within that country. The Syrian people cannot accept Assad as part of their future. However, we are flexible about how political transition would work. We are certainly discussing that, and ultimately it is for the Syrian people to decide. But Assad cannot be part of the future.

Lord Green of Deddington (CB): My Lords, I welcome the Government's very clear Statement of their policy towards Syria and endorse in particular what one might call the evolution of their attitude towards the Government in Damascus. Here I endorse the remarks of the noble Lord, Lord Wright, and the noble Lord, Lord Davies. We underestimate the strength and stability of the regime in Damascus. More importantly, will the Minister assure us that while seeking a regime more widely acceptable in Damascus, we will above all avoid a collapse of authority in central Syria? The only result of that would be not just chaos but the most appalling bloodshed, and it must be avoided.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: My Lords, to be clear, we are proposing military action to attack ISIL. However, we are saying that Assad cannot be part of the future of Syria, because for us ultimately to eradicate ISIL we will have to see a different regime in Syria. I say to the noble Lord, and partly in response to my noble friend Lord Dobbs, that Assad has been barbaric to his own people; he has used chemical weapons on his own people. That is why he cannot be part of a future, because there has to be a stability if we are to see a future that is safe for all of us, wherever we live in the world.

Lord Judd (Lab): My Lords, the Prime Minister quoted in his Statement the words of Ban Ki-moon—that a missile can kill a terrorist but it takes good governance to win the battle. I suggest that good governance involves winning the battle for hearts and minds. What worries me about bombing without substantial demonstrations of support on the ground and without active military support on the ground is that it has an ugly tendency to play into the hands of the extremists, who can exploit it. It therefore seems to me very important if we are to go ahead—I am not against going ahead but I am very much in favour of going ahead from the strongest possible position—that we get very substantial, specific assurances from sufficient people with authority on the ground that they will provide the military support that is necessary.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: My Lords, the extremists are already attacking us. That is why doing nothing is not an option. We are already in this country a target for ISIL. We know we are because we have been able to avoid at least seven attempts to launch a direct

terrorist attack here in the UK. The noble Lord asks about the ground troops that are already in place in Syria. At the moment, they are starting to make progress in defeating ISIL. We have to be in there too because, together, we will be able to achieve the success that we need to achieve.

Lord Thomas of Gresford (LD): My Lords, if the ground forces to which the Leader has referred were defeated or looked as though they were losing, would the British Government send in ground troops to make sure that they did not lose?

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: I have been clear that our proposal is about providing air support to existing ground forces. We are doing it this way because we think this is one of the key lessons that we learned from previous military interventions over the last decade or so. So no, this is about local ground forces that are already there.

Lord Marlesford (Con): My Lords, I thought that the Prime Minister was making an absolutely clear distinction between military action against ISIS and the desire that the Government have to see the end of Assad. But as the Statement progressed, I felt that there was more and more confusion between the two. I was particularly concerned when my noble friend, in answer to a question from the Opposition Front Bench, said that we have to help the anti-Assad forces to make progress. Can she reassure me that in no circumstances will British military action be taken to help the anti-Assad forces make progress against Assad?

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: Forgive me if I was not clear, but the point I was trying to make is that the moderate opposition forces are the forces that are also fighting ISIL. They are fighting two fronts. When I say that, the point I am trying to make is that these are people who are in opposition to Assad. They are not his people; they are the moderates. They are the people who he has been trying to attack; he does not want them there because they are a threat to him continuing. ISIL is also attacking the moderates. The moderates are under attack on all fronts, but they are the only forces on the ground that are actively attacking ISIL.

Lord Elton (Con): My Lords, the quarrel with ISIL is different from the quarrel with Assad. I agree with my noble friend when he says that the two must be kept separate in the minds of those planning what is to happen. Those of us of a certain age remember when large western and British forces were advancing east across Germany to meet large military forces from Russia advancing west. We remember the tensions that evolved then, the ruin of that state and the need to replace it with something that worked. I suggest that, as a contingency plan, some department of the Government should be looking at what actually happened and how that difficulty was resolved.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: Clearly, there are always lessons to be learned from history. However, what I have outlined today is a clear and comprehensive

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strategy and approach that the Government want to pursue to ultimately defeat ISIL and bring stability to the region, for all the reasons that I have already outlined.

Lord Purvis of Tweed (LD): My Lords, I make one final further attempt for a greater degree of clarification in response to the noble Lord's question about any potential use of British military forces, their targeting and the rules of engagement that they may well operate under. Can the Leader of the House be quite clear on whether they will rule out British military forces being used to target Assad-regime assets?

Baroness Stowell of Beeston: Our plan is to target ISIL. This is a strategy to target ISIL and that is what we are going to do. This is not about military action against Assad; it is about military action against ISIL. ISIL is our target and that is who we are going to go after.

Universities: Freedom of Speech

Motion to Take Note

1.07 pm

Moved by Baroness Deech

That this House takes note of the protection of freedom of speech in universities.

Baroness Deech (CB): My Lords, if ever there was a time when free speech was vital, not only in our universities but in general discourse, it is now. I am therefore especially pleased that there are two maiden speakers today who both have special and different perspectives on the topic. We all look forward to their contributions and wish them well in this and all their future work in this House.

Many Members of this House will have been students when there were troubles of one sort or another, depending on the age. Indeed, we may have cut our teeth on some of them. There were protests, sometimes violent, in the past, but never have those protests been so widely or indiscriminately launched and never have the university authorities been so complicit in allowing the free exchange of ideas to be closed down. Nor, in my experience, have students ever been so self-censorious. They claim a right not to be offended, but we cannot secure freedom of expression if we all also maintain a right not to be offended. That closes down the freedom of speech of others and, as explained by my noble friend Lady O'Neill in a recent Theos lecture, offence is subjective. Only that which is unlawful should be banned.

Free speech is under attack because of a widespread culture of victimisation and grievance. People are fearful of the consequences if they express unpopular views and so they stay silent. Academic freedom and freedom of speech are the poorer for it. There is a pincer movement between students blocking speech

they disapprove of and the operation of the many laws imposed on universities to promote and control speech, which I will explain.

Universities have a unique responsibility to promote and secure free speech, not only for the advancement of public knowledge but for the training of our future leaders and professionals. Universities are bound by statute to give external speakers a platform, provided that they are speaking within the law. Extreme but lawful views should not be repressed but challenged. But extremist speakers are not being challenged because the students themselves are silencing the challengers.

The freedom of expression, belief and assembly is protected by the European Convention on Human Rights. But restrictions are allowed, as are prescribed by law, which is necessary in a democratic society and for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

According to a ranking by *Spiked* magazine, 80% of universities and 61% of student unions censor speech to some extent. Some of the London universities are among the worst. They mandate explicit restrictions on speech, including but not limited to bans on specific ideologies, political affiliations, beliefs, books, speakers or words, and students may even be expelled on the grounds of their controversial views.

The National Union of Students and some other unions have invented a safe space policy, the gist of which is that students should always feel, "comfortable and safe". Any idea that has the potential to upset students or cause discomfort is seen as a problem. Some beliefs are branded as dangerous and to be repressed. So the protection of safety for some students means that others are labelled as dangerous and hateful. The NUS wants all campus speech to be empowering, non-judgmental and non-threatening. If it is not, it will be shouted down, obstructed or banned.

These are some examples of students closing down freedom—some are ridiculous, some are serious. Examples include the banning of sombreros at a student fair; banning Halloween costumes and Bibles; and the requirement to refrain from using hand gestures that denote disagreement, such as applause. Pro-life groups are banned, as are Coca-Cola and a Nietzsche reading group. Students are allowed to opt out of difficult topics and have to be given a so-called "trigger warning" that something in the lecture may upset them. Oxford banned a magazine with articles defending colonialism. A Muslim woman who had been assaulted in Egypt during the Arab spring was stopped from giving a talk at London Met on the need for a sexual revolution in the Middle East.

Speakers are banned for holding politically incorrect views about transgender issues or even for addressing the free-speech problem. The NUS has a no platform policy that blocks what it defines as racist, fascist, transphobic and rape-denying speakers, so it is no to the name of Cecil Rhodes but yes to the millions of funding given to universities by Middle Eastern despots who in their states repress the freedoms so dear to our students. Students have stopped speeches by many politicians, including some of your Lordships. York cancelled an International Men's Day debate about the challenges that men face in education and employment. You could not make it up.

The worst case was the dismissal of the Nobel Prize winner Sir Tim Hunt from his position at UCL after a poor joke about women scientists. Those who objected to him could not themselves begin to measure up to his achievements in science and the promotion that, in practice, he gave to women scientists. Lecturers and authorities are bowing to students' whims. There is an academic boycott of Israel, which has been condemned by the Prime Minister and is discriminatory—and some Israeli or Jewish students do not get to enjoy the safe space that the NUS guarantees to others.

While interesting, lawful speech is being stopped, at the other end of the spectrum, illegal and authoritarian speakers are not being blocked or challenged. We cannot deny that, whether radicalised at university or not, some of our own terrorists are graduates of British universities—for example Jihadi John from the University of Westminster, and the underpants bomber from UCL. Other students' minds are being filled with unlawful material about homophobia, hatred of minorities, apostasy and the repression of women. The think tank Student Rights logged 123 extremist speakers on campus in 2014—speakers who called for religious law to prevail over democracy, the enslavement of women, support for convicted terrorists and intolerance of minorities and non-believers. At several universities, speakers rejected the idea of freedom of speech and called for the death penalty for homosexuality and fornication.

The NUS conference in 2015 resolved to work alongside the organisation CAGE, an organisation which had praised Jihadi John, supported jihad against British soldiers abroad, and was close to the killer of Lee Rigby—although the NUS later said that it would not work with CAGE. What is so sad about the speeches on religious jurisprudence at universities is that they are sermons, not open to debate or challenge, which are after all the best way to open young minds, especially in current circumstances. Not only is that poison allowed to spread, it is actually against the law, and the universities are failing in their duty to apply it.

This is a quick run-down of the laws—arguably too many—that mean universities must monitor free speech. The Education (No.2) Act 1986 requires them to secure freedom of speech within the law for members and visitors. They are obliged to maintain a code of practice in relation to speakers. The Public Order Act 1986 bans race hatred. The Education Reform Act 1988 provides for protection of academic freedom. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 bans threatening and abusive behaviour causing alarm and distress. The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 does what it says. The Terrorism Acts 2000 and 2006 ban its glorification. The Charities Act 2006 applies to student unions. The Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 bans the inciting of hatred on the ground of sexual orientation. The Equality Act 2010 includes an obligation to foster good relations between different groups on campus. In sum, freedom of speech is what is left only after the law is taken into account—no harassment, defamation, hate speech, discrimination and incitement to violence. Encouragement of terrorism and inviting support for a proscribed terrorist organisation are criminal offences.

Given the evidence of effective exposure to terrorism in our universities, it is hard to object to the motive behind the Prevent policy and guidance, introduced by the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015—nor is it new. It has been estimated that 17 UK graduates have been involved in terrorism and some have gone to Syria, and those who wish to recruit can easily target university students. The Prevent guidance requires universities to ensure that where there are speakers with extremist views on terrorism or who preach non-violent extremism they should be challenged with opposing views at the same event, rather than be banned from speaking. But they should allow the event to proceed only where they are “entirely convinced” that the risk can be “fully mitigated”, not if there remains any doubt. So where a lecture falls into this category of extremism, the university may impose conditions to ensure openness and peaceful debate.

This is difficult stuff. Many of the phrases that I have just used require definition and great sensitivity, balancing implementation and the need for academic freedom and freedom of lawful speech; and there are practical difficulties in getting advance notice and ensuring that the audience can challenge. Yet the need for lawful speech only is clear and indisputable. It applies not only in universities, but in the nation generally, that we should not call for killing, hatred of minorities or the subjugation of women.

Nevertheless, the NUS is opposing the Prevent policy, although it is hard to take that union seriously given its inability to distinguish between unpalatable views, which it is happy to ban, and the unlawful. The union calls it racist, that it will mean lecturers spying on students and will inhibit controversial ideas. Some 500 lecturers objected to it, those self-same lecturers who have been supine in the face of student censorship and the visits of extremist speakers. It suggests that it is hard to deny the actuality of terrorism and its student supporters. There is no evidence of lecturers spying on students: they are actually quite reluctant to do anything for fear of being accused of being racist. The bus bomber in Tavistock Square 10 years ago was noted by his lecturer as an extremist without any following intervention.

So what is to be done about these increasing limitations on free speech? We need to be helpful and supportive to universities, for they bear a heavy burden. First, they and their lecturers should know, or be trained in the law. It is not right to shelter behind the excuse that student unions are autonomous bodies, for they are not. They are subject to charity laws and many of the other laws I have listed. The lecturers should know that they have a duty to promote good relations between different groups on campus, including in student unions under the Equality Act. They should be told that boycotts are racist, discriminatory, undermine academic research and are contrary to the global knowledge goal of the International Council for Science.

Rather than citing health and safety laws as an excuse for closing down an event where there are likely to be protests, the universities should challenge the protesters and carry out the risk assessments they are obliged to undertake. Prevent training and explanation should be mandatory for all student union officials.

[BARONESS DEECH]

Above all, more work needs to be done to make the prevent guidance user-friendly. Words such as British values, extremism and radicalisation need to be defined. A compendium of all the relevant laws and definitions should be compiled. Students should be told in no uncertain terms to stop being sanctimonious ninnies and to drop illusions of victimisation.

Will the Minister ensure that these steps are taken? The time is ripe for national leadership from Universities UK on the whole issue, not fence-sitting. An apology is owed to Sir Tim Hunt. Come back Cardinal Newman. In his *The Idea of a University* he said that, “it is a place of teaching universal knowledge”.

That phrase should be emblazoned on the literature of every fresher manual. Students should be armed with the procedures to defend it. I beg to move.

1.21 pm

Lord Patten (Con): My Lords, the noble Baroness’s speech was absolutely masterly. I have not enjoyed a speech so much, or agreed with a speech so much, in the whole time I have been here in the House of Lords—with the exception of one or two that I myself made and have reread.

I have absolute sympathy with everything that the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, said. The only addition I would make before resting my case is that I think we need not just protection but much more promotion of freedom of speech in our universities by those who are meant to be the leaders of our universities—the vice-chancellors, heads of colleges and others, who need to come out from cowering in their common rooms and offices to take on these issues much more themselves.

I believe that freedom of expression is vital. I also think that freedom from intolerance seems central to the very idea of the university as a community of thinkers, and should be absolutely central to the soul of any university—if universities and institutions can have souls. I may need the advice of the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Ely on that, perhaps at a later stage outside the Chamber. I respect the freedom of universities to run their own affairs as independent bodies corporate and to take their own individual approaches on how they protect freedoms with their own codes of practice. Freedom of speech rankings were produced by *Spiked*, to which the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, has already referred—I had not come across it until lately, and am now an avid reader and may even become a subscriber to this magazine. It was much publicised back in February for purporting to show that only one in five universities absolutely subscribes to total freedom of speech, according to red, amber and green dashboard rankings.

These are just league tables based on qualitative evidence, with all the inaccuracies and unfairnesses that sometimes league tables have. So I did a bit of my own research and picked on a particular university: Exeter. It seemed to be very good and lo and behold it turned out to get an emphatic green from *Spiked*. Why was it given that award for supporting freedom of speech? Well, maybe it has to do with its seemingly excellent code of practice. Perhaps the students are a

rather quiet bunch who do not like rioting. Perhaps it has a strong vice-chancellor and strong college councillors who have stamped on some of the issues to which the noble Baroness referred.

My own instinct tells me that good, firm leadership is needed. When corporate outfits, whether they are political parties, churches, great national companies or indeed universities rot, they generally rot from the head down because there is inadequate leadership from the top. The best form of protection of freedom of speech within universities comes from the strong and active promotion of freedom of speech. I shall give two examples of where I wish there had been that promotion. They both come from this month. Cambridge University asked a scholar called Dr Starkey to take part in a promotional fundraising film, but there were some protests from students and some faculty members who doubtless wanted to preserve their budgetary position, so it simply airbrushed the good doctor out of the film and carried on. I have heard nothing from the vice-chancellor of Cambridge University about this, and whether this is in the interests of freedom.

Secondly, also this month, across in Oxford, scholars, young and old, are disapproving of Cecil Rhodes. There is nothing wrong with that; it is their right to disapprove of what Cecil Rhodes said and wrote. However, they are now demonstrating and chanting “Rhodes must fall”—which means that they want to see the statue of Cecil Rhodes in Oxford pulled down, for all the world as if he were Saddam Hussein or, after the wall came down, a dictator like Lenin.

I ask, in conclusion: have the students of the University of Oxford lost their sense of irony? They are suggesting by pulling down a statue of Rhodes that they should follow what ISIS is doing in iconoclastically pulling down statues of which they do not approve in the Far East. I think that universities serve the purpose of freedom of speech not by being silent but by coming out and showing leadership on issues like this.

1.26 pm

Baroness Garden of Frogmal (LD): My Lords, the noble Baroness, Lady Warwick, has, with regret, had to withdraw her name, so I now join in thanking the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, for introducing this important debate, and for such a comprehensive overview.

As she set out, this is an issue of growing concern. There is indeed no right not to be offended. Matters we might find offensive can sometimes serve the useful purpose of making us challenge our assumptions and views, analyse why we find something offensive and sift out what is intrinsically bad from what makes us feel uncomfortable. Universities UK has suggested that by providing an environment for debate, universities create a forum for differing and difficult views to be discussed and challenged. This gives students the opportunity to develop important skills in the analysis and refutation of accepted ideas, positions and modes of behaviour. If students only ever hear and discuss ideas with which they agree, their education will not have served them well. Indeed, it would be a sorry university experience which never took them out of their comfort zone.

A classic example of our long-standing regard for freedom of speech came in the 1930s with the famous King and country debate at the Oxford Union in February 1933. The motion,

“That this House will in no circumstances fight for its King and Country”,

was carried by 275 votes to 153. It is one of the most widely reported and discussed debates at the Oxford Union. There are varying opinions as to how far it influenced Hitler and Mussolini into thinking that the British were pacifists who would present little opposition to potential aggressors.

Interestingly, the Cambridge Union had staged a similar pacifist debate in 1927, also carried by 213 votes to 138, but it went unreported. Both universities felt unfettered in debating issues which could well have caused offence and expressing views which could have been seen as seditious. But that was before the days of instant, widespread communication. Email and other forms of social media mean that simple messages can go viral, without reflection, analysis or context. The process that used to allow for thinking before writing has been abbreviated into a process of communicating without finding out the facts or considering wider implications. People today respond rapidly, if not instantly. They react on the spot. Under these circumstances, any boundaries for freedom of speech become much more difficult to define.

The Prevent strategy sets out that:

“Colleges have a clear and unambiguous role to play in helping to safeguard vulnerable young people from radicalisation and recruitment by terrorist organisations”.

Equality policies also state that homophobic, sexist and racist language will not be tolerated. Inevitably, there will be grey areas where freedom of expression will appear to be curtailed to take regard of the care of students. It is impossible to legislate for all the occasions when this might arise. Universities, more than ever, have a requirement to ensure that channels of communication remain open between staff, students and outside organisations.

This requires a whole new skill set from the academics of yesteryear. They are rising to the challenge. As Universities UK relates, the actions undertaken by institutions will vary, but will normally include participation in multiagency work, training student-facing staff to improve awareness of the signs of violent extremism, developing policies relating to external speaker requests, supporting interfaith activities, and many more. I ask the Minister: what are the Government doing to ensure that universities are supported in these endeavours and not stifled by legislation?

Exposure to a whole range of ideas remains an important part of university education. Universities perform a vital role in providing a safe place for views, beliefs and even prejudices to be challenged and debated constructively. We have a great tradition of being a tolerant society. Tolerance does not mean indifference, but creates a multicultural nation that draws strength, rather than conflict, from its differences. Even the National Union of Students, which has great regard for the care of students, asserts that the right to freedom of speech is integral to any democracy. It is too precious to lose.

1.30 pm

Baroness Butler-Sloss (CB): My Lords, I, too, say what a splendid speech we had from the noble Baroness, Lady Deech.

I am chairman of a commission on religion and belief in modern-day Britain. We are issuing a report next month. I want to share with the House two points that have come out of evidence we have taken right across the United Kingdom. The first is the importance of tolerating difference: the learning of respect for other people’s views—even when those who listen strongly disagree with what is being said—and of the benefits of that disagreement with what they are listening to.

The second point, which the Government should take into account, is the unintended consequences of important counterterrorism legislation, in particular the rhetoric that accompanies it. One of the problems with it is that the Muslim population in this country—we have heard a great deal of evidence about this—feel that they are “other”, as they put it, that they do not belong. They feel that they are not trusted. There is a much greater need for dialogue, discussion and listening to those with whom one disagrees.

Therefore, universities are places of learning outside of the academic studies followed by undergraduates, postgraduates and so on. It is a crucial setting for argument, dissent and opposing points of view. I was particularly dismayed by students who have been preventing robust discussion by speakers of whom they do not approve. I was particularly shocked by the examples that the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, gave in her speech. Yesterday in Questions, the noble Baroness, Lady O’Neill, reminded us that freedom of speech includes the freedom to offend. That should be censored only for very good reason. I perhaps should add that the freedom to offend does not include a duty gratuitously to offend.

There is a very difficult balance to be struck between the necessary excluding of extremist, unacceptable speakers on campus—which, as we have again learnt from the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, is not necessarily followed by those who should be dealing with it—and academic freedom of speech. It seems to me that the Government should be careful not to add to excessive restrictions on academic freedom to discuss the issues that our commission believes need urgently to be exposed to robust debate.

1.33 pm

Lord O’Shaughnessy (Con) (Maiden Speech): My Lords, it is with great pleasure that I give my maiden speech, and I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, for calling this important debate and for her superb speech.

It must be because I work in education, but in the last month I have found it impossible to lose the sensation of joining a new school: a complicated set of rules to learn, overseen by a kindly but authoritative headmistress, with plenty of older boys and girls to look up to. And, of course, the wag who makes everyone laugh, played, on the day of my introduction, by my two year-old daughter Hope, who, as I entered

[LORD O'SHAUGHNESSY]
the Chamber, shouted, "Daddy" from up in the Gallery. Having read Walter Bagehot at school, I now understand that this House is not only "efficient", but the most "dignified" part of the British constitution. Its hallmark is the great courtesy and kindness shown by everyone—the doorkeepers, clerks, Peers and staff. It makes the House a joy to spend time in, as well as a huge privilege.

For their wisdom and guidance, I thank my Whip and mentor, my noble friend Lord Younger of Leckie, and my supporters, my noble friends Lady Evans of Bowes Park and Lord Nash—the noble Baroness being responsible for giving me my first job in politics. I also thank another former boss, the noble Lord, Lord Mendelsohn, for his advice. He once bought me the box set of "The Godfather" and said, "Watch this, it'll teach you everything you need to know about politics". I am not sure how well Don Corleone would have got on at this end of the Palace.

In 15 years of working in policy and politics, I learnt that every successful political party must have a deep compassion—a love, in fact—for the British people, their history and their culture. I have also learnt that politics is at its most powerful when it seeks to ensure that everybody, especially those who are disadvantaged or excluded, can play a full part in our island story. I call this idea progressive conservatism, and it lay at the heart of the 2010 general election manifesto, which I had the honour of authoring. That document was called *Invitation to Join the Government of Britain*, although when drafting it I did not expect that the first people to RSVP would be the Liberal Democrats.

Nevertheless, the coalition Government I was very proud to serve were a radical and reforming Administration, and some of their greatest achievements were in education. The policies on free schools, turning all schools into academies and the pupil premium have roots in a report I wrote in 2005 for Policy Exchange, called *More Good School Places*. But, critically, they draw on Labour and Liberal Democrat ideas, too. There is a strong history of bipartisanship in school reform, so it is a particular honour to take my place in this House with so many former education Ministers, including my noble friends Lord Patten and Lord Baker, the noble Lords, Lord Blunkett and Lord Adonis, and others—yet another reason why this House still has so much to offer.

The purpose of education is much disputed, but for me it is best summed up in the words of Martin Luther King, who said:

"Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education".

This sums up the philosophy behind the group of primary schools I founded. Floreat Education aims to help children flourish by giving them a knowledge-rich curriculum, while explicitly and purposefully developing their character virtues. Our first two schools opened in September and we will open three more in 2016.

A true education, I believe, allows young people to draw on the accumulated knowledge of civilisation to develop what Aristotle called *phronesis*, or practical wisdom. Its goal is to give people power to become the authors of their own life stories, to think critically and to seek truth. Nowhere is the pursuit of truth more important than in our universities. John Stuart Mill

said that truth unchallenged becomes dogma, so we all have an obligation to seek out views that differ from our own. This can be uncomfortable: we prefer to hear information that supports what we already think. Psychologists call this confirmation bias, but it is an impulse to be resisted, not indulged.

Freedom of speech, then, is not a luxury of liberal democracies; it is the *sine qua non* of intellectual progress. Of course, it is right that no freedom exists unfettered. Given the threats we face, it is right that incitements to violence and hatred are against the law. But it is a profound mistake to believe that every view we hold is shorn of imperfection and should never be challenged. Our centres of advanced learning must be at the vanguard of attempts to find universal, ethical truths about the way we should live. That is impossible unless people are free to speak, to challenge, and to seek common understanding.

1.38 pm

Lord Leigh of Hurley (Con): My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend Lord O'Shaughnessy on an excellent maiden speech—albeit a little short due to the time restriction—and welcome him to your Lordships' House. We are lucky to have someone who has spent so many years thinking about education, our country and how to improve it, not least as head of research at one of the country's most distinguished think tanks, Policy Exchange, but also, of course, advising our Prime Minister as his director of policy. It is always good to be surrounded by smart people. We can only welcome the enhancement of this House by someone who has been described as a new Aristotelian promoter of positive psychology in education. Clearly, we will hear much more from someone who is fizzing with ideas and enthusiasm on his next steps in public service of this country.

I warmly congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, on securing this debate and on her excellent speech. We could all be forgiven for thinking that such a debate was unnecessary because, if universities are for anything, surely they are for a pluralism of thought, a debate of ideas and the fundamental principle that everything should be challenged in order to strengthen it. The noble Lord, Lord O'Shaughnessy, has reminded us that John Stuart Mill said that if an opinion,

"is not fully, frequently and fearlessly discussed, it will be held as a dead dogma, not a living truth".

Sadly, as the noble Baroness and others have said, our universities are in danger of becoming anything but the place for free speech.

I was moved to speak in this debate partly because of actions of my alma mater, the University of Southampton. In April of this year it was due to host a conference, the entire premise of which, backed up by a homogenous list of speakers—the usual suspects—was to question the right of Israel to exist as a nation state, and essentially to call for its elimination. No other nation state had ever had its right to exist questioned at Southampton University. I followed the example that my noble friend Lord Patten would have welcomed of writing to the vice-chancellor to ask for

his leadership in this matter. We corresponded because I was upset by the university's failure to lead on this, but I did not get very far.

However, the response from the Academic Friends of Israel was much more dignified than mine, in refusing to call for the conference to be cancelled or even for balance to be added to the programme. Instead, they simply chose to exercise their own right to free speech, to publicly criticise the one-sided nature of the programme, and to expose the questionable biographies of some of the speakers.

Contrast this with events of the previous autumn, when an Israeli professor, Mark Auslander—whom I have never met—was due to give a talk at Southampton on the subject of optical sensors: not views about the State of Israel, just views about science and technology, a field in which Israel has apparently long been a world leader. Almost unbelievably, the lecture had to be cancelled due to intimidation. This was suppression of free speech, combined with the worst of the politics of identity. Protestors were so afraid of what an Israeli might have to say about optical sensors, that they would not even hear him out. Perhaps they were interested in hearing about optical sensors, but not from an Israeli.

As our own Prime Minister has said:

"It is absolutely right that in Britain's universities, students and faculty should be able to criticise Israel, just as they can criticise any country ... But it is absolutely wrong that in any of our universities there should be an environment where students are scared to express their Judaism or their Zionism freely".

The problem is, of course, bigger than Southampton, bigger than Israel and bigger even than anti-Semitism. It is not confined to the UK. Speakers ranging from Condoleezza Rice, the IMF head Christine Lagarde, and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, have all been invited to speak at American universities and then had their invitations withdrawn due to howls of protest from students.

There is room for hope. The University of Chicago has recently published a report in which it says:

"It is not the proper role of the University to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable or even deeply offensive".

I commend this conclusion and sincerely hope that other universities will follow suit, both in the US and in the UK.

Indeed, this House, too, can be an example. Whether it is on defence and security, the economy, welfare or public services, we strengthen our democracy by coming here and airing our disagreements, improving our arguments and bolstering our understanding. Let us hope that university campuses will allow Professor Auslander and other distinguished academics from around the world the same courtesy.

1.43 pm

Lord Pannick (CB): My Lords, I, too, am very grateful to the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, for securing this debate and for opening it so forcefully. It is much more entertaining, I can tell your Lordships, to listen to the noble Baroness in this House than to be subjected, as I was in the 1970s, to her powerful academic freedom as my tutor when I read out a tutorial. I hope that I do better today.

I want to focus on the damage that is being done to freedom of speech in universities by the guidance that has been issued by the Government under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to address non-violent extremism. Your Lordships will recall that, when the Bill was debated earlier this year, this House persuaded the Government to include references to the importance of free speech and academic freedom. The guidance was approved by this House and by the other place in September. The guidance is not directed at speech that encourages terrorism because that, of course, is already a criminal offence. There is no definition of non-violent extremism. The Minister for Security, Mr Hayes, told the House of Commons in September that the concept would be defined in a forthcoming Bill. It would be very helpful if the Minister, when she comes to reply, could tell the House when that Bill will be published.

This guidance is drafted in very restrictive terms. It says that a university must prevent a speaker from being heard in relation to non-violent extremism unless the university is "entirely convinced" that the speaker will be answered so as to remove "any doubt" that the risks of non-violent extremism will be "fully mitigated". If taken seriously, this would impede debate on many sensitive subjects. I entirely share the Government's analysis of the seriousness of the threat to our society posed by terrorists and their sympathisers, and I agree that the root cause of the current wave of terrorism is a perverted ideology. The central question, however, is how best to combat such beliefs, and the essence of the principle of free speech is that the answer to dangerous ideas is more speech, not less speech.

The principle, in this context, marches together with pragmatism. Requiring universities to close down debate whenever there is any risk of an extremist not being adequately answered will not drain the poison; it will make it harder to detect and it will confer on such ideas a banned status that will make them only more attractive to the potential audience. We need to confront and challenge the non-violent extremists in universities so as to expose the poverty of their reasoning and their contempt for the values of our civilised society. We are in danger of losing our confidence in free speech, one of the central values that define the society that we are defending against the terrorists. It is ironic indeed that, in answer to the non-violent extremists' attack on our core values, the Government are weakening one of those very values—freedom of expression—and are doing so in the very place, the universities, where freedom of speech is so vital to the health of our society.

1.48 pm

The Lord Bishop of Ely: I, too, take the opportunity to congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, for bringing this debate about. I would be very glad to engage in metaphysical conversation with the noble Lord, Lord Patten, about the soul of the university sometime outside the Chamber. I am more concerned for us to promote and understand the importance of religious literacy in the defence of free speech, and the Church's engagement with a number of institutions in seeking to make the most of the Prevent agenda without throwing aside openness and readiness to engage in full debate.

[THE LORD BISHOP OF ELY]

One of my heroes in theology is Peter Abelard who, in the 12th century in Paris, by taking risks with academic freedom at the time in his *Sic et Non* lectures, had students flocking to Paris. While recognising that at the heart of study was risky engagement, he put himself at risk under an oppressive church authority at the time to set people free. This is the foundation of western education, which we must continue to promote. Universities must be places where there is passionate and forensic debate, actively promoted. That is not only a statutory obligation; more importantly, it is at the heart of any scholarly purpose, as we discover the truth with one another and for ourselves.

At the heart of Christian teaching is the recurrent theme of reconciliation. The churches are all committed to building resilience in conflict transformation. It strikes me that universities are places where students may first learn about intellectual and community conflicts. If we allow the dominant agenda to become the refusal to be exposed to being offended, we deny ourselves the rich opportunity to be agents of the transformation of conflict through positive engagement.

Many years ago, I was preaching at a midnight mass and someone came into the church and said, “You are all hypocrites”. I said, “Well, come in, there’s always room for one more”. We all need to engage with people, even those who are different from us, recognising that people have the right to challenge us and to speak out against us. However, we need to make that positive engagement and to continue to believe—and to encourage our students to have the character and the confidence to believe—in the power of persuasion around our own truth claims and what we want to make of them. This is how I believe that universities serve the resilience of our democracy.

If there was more than one right reverend Prelate here this afternoon, I am sure we would agree on all sorts of things, but there would be other matters where there would be considerable debate and disagreement between us. This serves a robust and generous pluralism. This must be cherished in our universities and must not be undermined by excessive institutional caution or by the unintended consequences of laudable policies to tackle hate crime and extremism. Where the clash of ideas flows from strongly held moral and ethical convictions, it is even more important that our universities actively enable and support the patterns of debate and good disagreement which are at the heart of learning and intellectual exploration. It is a vital area of learning that we do not aim at a strangely disconnected tolerance of almost everything but at the serious critical engagement with unpalatable ideas while still honouring the integrity of the person expressing them.

1.52 pm

Lord Trevethin and Oaksey (CB) (Maiden Speech): My Lords, it is a great honour to stand up in your Lordships’ House for the first time. I echo the expression of gratitude to which the noble Lord, Lord O’Shaughnessy, gave voice. I have been very touched by the kind and generous welcome that I have received from Members of the House who have shown me the ropes. I am also very grateful to the parliamentary

staff who see me trying to look purposeful and businesslike as I walk around the House from one corridor to another, wondering whether it is the corridor that I was in five minutes before. They conceal the fact that they know that perfectly well, so I am grateful to them, too.

I have received a lot of welcome advice about what I may say and, probably more importantly, what I should not say on this occasion. I know that I have to avoid controversy, which I will certainly try to do. I also know that I have to be brief. There appears to be a division of opinion on the extent to which the House welcomes autobiographical information. I will exercise economy in that respect. One noble Lord suggested that I should at all costs conceal the fact that I am a lawyer. I thought that that was going too far, so I confess that I have been a barrister for 30 years or so.

The matters to which the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, referred so eloquently matter a lot, in my view. I apologise to my noble and learned friend Lord Brown for stealing his thunder, since he was going to use exactly the same dictum, but I draw the House’s attention to some remarks of Sir Stephen Sedley in the Divisional Court. He said:

“Free speech includes not only the inoffensive but the irritating, the contentious, the eccentric, the heretical, the unwelcome and the provocative provided it does not tend to provoke violence”.

He went on to say, memorably:

“Freedom only to speak inoffensively is not worth having”.

That is clearly right.

Something is going on in our universities. I understand from those who know more about this than I do that it is a development which has gathered pace over the last five years or so. It may have travelled from America to some extent, but it is certainly gathering pace now in our universities. Why should that be so? Obviously, I do not know but one can speculate that the overprotective parenting of my generation may have played a part. One can speculate that the increasing tendency to demonise one’s political opponents, away from your Lordships’ House, has also played a part. One can also surmise—the chronology works well in this respect—that the advent of social media has lent force to this very unwelcome development. Facebook, Twitter, and a lot of others, whose names I do not know, make it easy to form crusades, express outrage en masse—what could be more fun than that?—and identify and pillory people who are traitors to the cause.

This is a very substantial problem. As identified by the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, the failure of the universities to exercise their statutory obligation to promote free speech is letting our students down, causing them to weaponise hypersensitivity and will send them out into the wider world oversensitive and inclined to engage in emotional reasoning, not critical analysis.

1.56 pm

Lord Brown of Eaton-under-Heywood (CB): My Lords, I am privileged to welcome the noble Lord, Lord Trevethin and Oaksey, to this House and, indeed, to these Cross Benches, and congratulate him on a most delightful and insightful maiden speech. I would have expected nothing less of so conspicuously successful

and a well-respected practising Silk, whose advocacy at the Bar I have enjoyed, admired and, indeed, benefited from periodically over the years. I cannot pretend that the noble Lord always persuaded me that he was right, but that could have been the fault of his case, or perhaps my fault, and certainly not his. I have no doubt that in the years to come he will from time to time lay aside his practice and make valuable contributions to our proceedings, as he did today. I greatly look forward to his doing so.

I join others in congratulating the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, on securing this debate and introducing it so comprehensively, eloquently and, indeed, compellingly. I had intended to say one or two things about the Prevent strategy and countering extremist ideology. Universities really ought to be the Speakers' Corners of the educational process. It is better by far to hear, challenge and reject extremist or, indeed, any other erroneous views than to ban them, but the fortnightly column of the noble Lord, Lord Pannick, which appeared in today's *Times*, says more succinctly and persuasively than I could all that I would have wished to say on the subject. Of course, today he and the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, have valuably elaborated on that. Therefore, I pick up instead on a rather different thread of the debate, following on from what the noble Baroness, Lady O'Neill, said at the end of the last Oral Question yesterday—namely, that,

“there is not and cannot be a right not to be offended”.—[*Official Report*, 25/11/15; col. 698.]

Of course, this, too, has been discussed by many speakers today.

Listening recently to one of Professor Roger Scruton's admirably provocative talks on BBC Radio 4's “A Point of View”, I was struck by what he had to say about taking offence. There is time only for one short quotation:

“One last word about the art of taking offence. Nowhere has this art been more assiduously cultivated than on American campuses ... the professor may now be required to issue ‘trigger warnings’, lest he stray into areas that might trigger the memory of some traumatic event in the life of the student. Visiting speakers with heretical views about feminism or homosexuality are also preceded by trigger warnings. Some campuses even provide safe rooms where the trembling students can retire for consolation should they have been exposed to the contamination of an unorthodox point of view”.

I hope that our universities will not succumb to quite that degree of lunacy. As the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, observed earlier, we have started some way down this road but perhaps, not yet at least, to safe rooms. A safe room would surely be a very poor substitute for the college buttery.

Finally, on the question of offensive speech, I return briefly to Lord Justice Sedley's famous judgment in the Redmond-Bate case. As my noble friend has just observed, he has already shot my fox. It is worth reminding ourselves of the final sentence of the paragraph in which Lord Justice Sedley deals with all this. He says:

“We in this country continue to owe a debt to the jury which in 1670 refused to convict the Quakers William Penn and William Mead for preaching ideas which offended against state orthodoxy”. The lower courts in that case, and indeed in some earlier cases concerning a breach of the peace, had

taken a wrong turn. They had decided that action should be taken against those exercising their right to free speech rather than those unreasonably provoked to violence by it. We should ensure that we do not make that mistake again.

2.02 pm

Lord Polak (Con): My Lords, I, too, congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, on securing this debate and delivering a rather brilliant tutorial. I declare certain non-financial interests: I am the honorary president of Conservative Friends of Israel; the unpaid director of a company that provides support for the All-Party Britain-Israel Parliamentary Group; and a trustee of the Yavneh Foundation Trust, a charity which owns the land and buildings in which a Jewish academy school operates.

In recent years, an environment of censorship, hostility and intimidation has emerged on university campuses across the United Kingdom. This current trend and the actions of some student bodies increasingly risk threatening freedom of speech at universities—places where debates and dialogue are fundamental. It can be difficult for Israel-supporting students to hold discussions on some campuses because of the prevailing attitude among many students and academics. By enabling extremist-linked organisations to speak on campuses but formally adopting boycott, divestment and sanctions—BDS—against Israel, the NUS has demonstrated selective discrimination.

The BDS campaign has actively sought to delegitimise Israel since 2005. Astonishingly, it has also consistently opposed efforts to bring Israelis and Palestinians together to work towards peace. BDS leaders advocate boycotting cultural exchanges between Israeli and Palestinian artists, and condemn educational co-operation between Israeli and Palestinian universities.

I am also concerned about what is happening here in Britain. In March 2015, staff and students at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies—SOAS—voted strongly in favour of a full academic boycott of Israel. The boycott campaign specifically called for cutting ties with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where BA students from SOAS itself can spend a year studying. In June 2015, the national executive committee of the National Union of Students voted to boycott Israeli companies and formally align itself with the aims of the BDS Movement. Yet, quite unbelievably, only a few months earlier the NUS executive committee had voted against a motion condemning Islamic State terrorists on the grounds that doing so could be considered Islamophobic. Principally, the academic boycott campaign is a major infringement on the right to free speech and directly impacts on the ability for academic co-operation between the two countries.

One answer to an academic boycott can be greater collaboration between academics in the UK and their counterparts in Israel. This Government and the British Council, together with the Pears Foundation, have taken a lead on this, most strikingly with BIRAX—the Britain Israel Research and Academic Exchange Partnership—which has many projects. Funding has been awarded to leading universities in Britain and

[LORD POLAK]

Israel: Cambridge, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Manchester, Nottingham and Oxford; and the Hadassah School of Medicine, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Galilee Research Institute, Technion, and the Weizmann Institute of Science. The University of Manchester and Technion in Haifa partnered in 2013 to collaborate jointly on research projects focusing on heart disease, stem cell and genetic research. There are many other areas of collaboration. In cybersecurity, for example, the bilateral UK-Israel academic partnerships are the University of Bristol and Bar-Ilan University in Tel Aviv; University College London and Bar-Ilan again; and the University of Kent and the Ministry of Science and Technology at Haifa.

Britain, Israel and society as a whole have much to lose if this sort of collaboration is stopped. The funding of these programmes should be not only safeguarded but enhanced. Does my noble friend the Minister agree with me that academic exchanges can help undermine those who wish to boycott and stifle freedom of speech? Will she confirm that Her Majesty's Government will not only safeguard the programmes I have mentioned but extend and enhance them?

2.07 pm

Lord Hastings of Scarisbrick (CB): My Lords, we are all deeply grateful to the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, for unleashing an energising and vital debate. During the debate, we have learned of horrendous stories of where universities and the students within them have abused their desire to seek knowledge and instead have become the guardians of ignorance. I had the great privilege of speaking at the Cambridge Union just two weeks ago, addressing a large group of medical students who are using information technology as a mechanism to drive medical analysis, particularly in the continent of Africa. That is a great example of how students continue to become proactive and intelligent in pursuing issues rather than just fighting over ideas.

One of the greatest activists of our age was Mother Teresa. She said that at all times we should preach—in her case, preach Christianity—and teach, “but only use words when necessary”.

I am sure the House needs no reminding that silence is sometimes a very powerful way to speak, but so is taking action. I have been associated, as have many of us, with an organisation called Enactus, which works in 53 universities across the UK with nearly 4,000 students. The thousands of students associated with Enactus—formerly called SIFE, or Students in Free Enterprise—actively use their time while at university and frequently thereafter to give voluntary hours in order to create enterprise that empowers others to have meaningful, economically effective lives.

The noble Lord, Lord Leigh, referred to the bizarre thinking of the University of Southampton in reference to a recent debate. By contrast, it was the University of Southampton which, at the recent Enactus World Cup in Johannesburg, in front of 5,000 students, won the Enactus World Champion award for the best international project of any university. It shows that in the same establishment, by taking a different approach, students can learn how to speak by acting proactively.

Specifically, the University of Southampton's students had devised an interesting way in which human waste could be used for fertilising agricultural lands. That human waste and fertilisation gave empowerment to, and provided business enterprise for, groups of people who, before, had been locked out of the economy. That won the global prize ahead of projects from 36 other countries.

That opportunity for university students to use their time articulating, thinking about, discussing and engaging with ideas and targeting those ideas effectively in voluntary work—giving 180,000 hours to the Enactus organisation in the United Kingdom and, globally, more than 6 million hours of voluntary time and commitment, all of which impact on more than 2 million people annually—is a very constructive way of making sure that free speech is maintained. By acting decisively in the interests of wider communities, students learn how to think with an open mind.

2.10 pm

Baroness Bakewell (Lab): My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend Lady Deech on introducing this very important debate, which is enlightening us all as we go along.

I speak as president of Birkbeck in the University of London. It is the home of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism—the only centre in the UK and one of only two in Europe whose mission is to promote the understanding of anti-Semitism. My noble friend Lady Deech asked what is to be done. Studies and institutes such as this can investigate the state of freedom of speech in our society.

Most recently, the institute has been dealing with what it calls the “new anti-Semitism”—a reference to when criticism of Israel and the policies of its Government are condemned as being anti-Semitic. There is no absolutely no consensus on this, and the noble Lord, Lord Polak, has just made a strong case on this very issue. Some colleagues in the academic world have chosen to boycott their corresponding faculties in Israel; others believe in engaging in debate with those they disagree with. I oppose boycotts. I believe in fierce and engaged debate, as indeed do the Israelis.

I turn to a different story. Recently, students at the University of Ottawa decided to cancel yoga practices. They made the case that it was derived from, and therefore usurped, a religious observance of another culture and should not be used as a keep-fit routine. Members of the transgender community recently denounced the film “Zoolander 2”, in which Benedict Cumberbatch stars as an androgynous model. In our highly individualised and narcissistic society, when groups—often of young people and often using social media—feel threatened and hurt by the contempt and mockery of others, they seek ever more protection for their feelings. That has to be resisted.

There is already an overabundance of laws that control or restrict what can be said. My noble friend Lady Deech gave a whole raft of them but she did not mention the laws of libel or slander. Of course, laws cannot control what is thought, and universities are about thinking. Universities, more than anywhere else, equip people to think clearly and consistently, and to

express their views within a safe and collegiate atmosphere. They should be the custodians of our free speech, not a challenge to it. If such a challenge comes from the student body, university authorities must be given the strength to resist it. Those who want to “no platform” speakers and ban meetings need to be confronted directly about their fears and objections. Discourse is the way to deal with ideas that we dislike. We need to keep that discourse going.

2.13 pm

Lord Singh of Wimbledon (CB): My Lords, I too congratulate my noble friend Lady Deech on securing this important debate and on her brilliant speech.

Everyone agrees that freedom of speech is essential for a functioning democracy. Unfortunately, it means different things to different people. To me, it is the right to criticise the actions of those in authority—Governments and powerful institutions, including religions and those in religious authority. Freedom of speech does not carry a right to gratuitously offend. Actions deliberately causing fear and distress are, rightly, against the law. While we should all uphold true freedom of speech, we also need to be on guard to ensure that it is not used as a force to harm or silence the weak and vulnerable.

Although I have real concerns about banning speakers who sometimes challenge conventional thinking, my main concern today is the treatment of religion and religious expression in universities. Despite government programmes such as Prevent, extremist preachers all too frequently use freedom of speech to incite hatred against others or to undermine democratic institutions or the rights and beliefs of others. At the same time, they are the first to react with bluster and threat to criticism of their actions. University authorities seem loath to act against such people.

Today, raising concerns about the behaviour of some young Muslims who bring disgrace to their faith carries the risk of being labelled as Islamophobic. The smear “Islamophobia” is often used to stifle even the mildest criticism. Another argument advanced by both people of religion and those in secular society is that religion is a personal matter and therefore beyond questioning and criticism. I strongly disagree with this view. Religion is not some sort of endangered way of life that excludes it from legitimate questioning and debate. If religions claim to hold eternal truths and the solution to many of the ills in society, they must open themselves up to robust challenge and questioning. Freedom of speech must include the right to challenge without fears of instant smears of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia or any other religious phobia.

As a Sikh, I believe, particularly now, that religion should allow and encourage the querying of teachings on social issues which, to some, may seem out of kilter with accepted norms and, at times, even out of kilter with common sense. In speaking to Sikh and other faith groups, I always say that if a practice seems to go against common sense, it must be challenged—in places of worship, universities and other walks of life. Universities are ideal places in which to conduct discussions affecting society. Such discussions can and should be probing but they must be conducted in courteous terms and never be used to demean or belittle.

2.17 pm

Lord Lester of Herne Hill (LD): My Lords, we are in the bleak shadow of the mass murders in Paris by those who hate our way of life and all that we cherish, including free speech. These psychopathic killers blaspheme against Islam and play into the hands of bigots who seek to stir up hatred against Muslim communities. Nothing in Islam authorises the cowardly massacre of innocent unarmed women, men, children and babies.

The great American jurist Louis Brandeis explained the value of free speech in near absolute terms. He wrote that,

“the fitting remedy for evil counsels is good ones”.

Like the rest of Europe, the United Kingdom does not go as far as the United States in protecting free speech as near absolute. We recognise that the right to free speech must be qualified to respect the rights of others, the prevention of crime and the protection of national security. As Anthony Lewis, the biographer of the First Amendment, wrote,

“in an age where words have inspired acts of mass murder ... it is not easy to believe that the only remedy for evil counsels ... should be good ones”.

As the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, said, we have ample legislation in this country protecting public order and criminalising the incitement of racial and religious hatred and the glorification of terrorism. Its enforcement, however, is problematic and can often create a Catch-22. What matters much more than legal protection is a vibrant culture of liberty. I say to the noble Lord, Lord Polak, and others who have rightly criticised boycotts that I successfully advised University College London that the boycott of Israel by academics was unlawful, and it ended.

What is lacking is the spirit of liberty among those who seek to deny a platform to controversial speakers. A week ago, high security had to be invoked to protect Germaine Greer when she gave a lecture at Cardiff University. She defied a fierce campaign to stop her delivering it on the ground that she had expressed transphobic views. As many have said, the governors and students of our universities should not deny a platform to anyone unless there is a clear and present danger of violence or the insidious abuse of freedom of speech by those who glorify terrorism, such as jihadi extremists and radical clerics inciting hatred and violence under cover of religion, or terrorists using social media to spread filthy messages that brainwash vulnerable young men and women into supporting their vile crimes.

The Government’s heavy-handed approach to defining extremism has not assisted universities. I echo the noble Lord, Lord Pannick, and say that the Government use far too broad a concept of “extremism”, capturing anything that constitutes,

“vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values”.

The concept of “British values” is vague enough to run the risk that those who strongly disagree with the Government and their actions will be treated as un-British and subversive. That has led to many university institutions cancelling events to be on the safe side. Unwittingly, they have opened themselves up to legal action on the

[LORD LESTER OF HERNE HILL]

basis of Section 43(2) of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, which forbids universities to deny the use of their premises to any individual or group on the grounds of their beliefs, views or policy objectives.

I say to the Government, as well as to universities, that we should encourage more rather than less speech and debate, provided always that it does not deny the very essence of liberty and make a mockery of free expression.

2.22 pm

Lord Skidelsky (CB): My Lords, I, too, thank the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, for making possible this debate. I shall draw your Lordships' attention to two threats to free speech on the campus. In four minutes I have time for only two threats, but I think that they cover most of the ground.

The first threat comes from the Government. The state has a duty to protect its citizens from terrorism. The Government have conceived of that duty in part as preventing university students from being what they call "radicalised". The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 requires universities to,

"prevent individuals from being drawn into terrorism".

This is construed as part of their duty to "care" for "vulnerable" students. Universities are required to assess the risks of students being drawn into terrorism and extremism, and to train staff how to assess those risks and "challenge extremist ideas". Universities must seek government guidance on which speakers to allow on campus. In this guidance terrorism and extremism are frequently conflated, as the noble Lords, Lord Pannick and Lord Lester, have pointed out, although very occasionally the drafters remember that one can hold extremist views without being a terrorist.

I turn to the second threat. The National Union of Students has opposed the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act on the grounds that it will lead to mass campus surveillance and the criminalisation of Muslims and black people. The universities should be kept as "open democratic spaces". All this would carry more conviction if student bodies were not themselves a big threat to free speech on the campus. Student unions in many universities run "no platform" policies for speakers whose views they consider reprehensible, even though they are legal. For the NUS—and this is the key—keeping students "safe" is paramount. Bristol University Students' Union runs a "safe space" policy aimed at ensuring students' safety from harassment. However, keeping students safe turns out to include keeping them "safe from radicalisation". So, despite the verbal skirmishes, the Government and students are quite united on the need to protect students from harmful ideas, differing only slightly in their definition of what they regard as harmful.

I must come clean: I hate the doublespeak that runs through the public pronouncements that I have read on this topic. How Orwell would have shuddered. The facts are pretty clear: universities have a statutory duty to uphold free speech and are bound by the Public Order Act to ban incitement to racial and religious hatred. So they have a duty to uphold free speech within the law. Similarly, the security forces have a

duty to keep the country safe from terrorism wherever it sprouts—prevention does not stop or continue on the campus. What I deny is that university students are an especially vulnerable species needing special protection against being abused or radicalised. Students are adults: they can vote, fight and die for their country, drive, drink alcohol and so on. Why should they be treated as adults in one branch of life and as children in another?

In particular, I think it is an abuse of thought and language to extend the good liberal notion of protecting people against harms to the decidedly unliberal notion of protecting them against harmful ideas.

2.26 pm

Lord Cormack (Con): My Lords, I echo the thanks to the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, for introducing this debate so splendidly.

In the dark days of January 1941, President Roosevelt looked forward to the time when we would have a world where everyone was free to worship and free from want and fear. At the top of his list, though, he looked to a world where everyone would have freedom of speech. Some 50 years after that, I had the great privilege of conducting some seminars in democracy in Bucharest, shortly after the fall of the ghastly tyrant. In those 50 years a large chunk of Europe, having emerged from a devastating war, had never known the meaning of freedom of speech. It was a marvellous experience to meet young people who had kept their spirits up by listening to the BBC World Service and who now felt that they were citizens of a country where they could indeed speak freely, expose the evils to which they had been subjected and look forward to a brighter day.

Since then, intolerance and intimidation have gone viral—one of the bad results of the internet. We now have a situation, graphically described not only by the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, but by two admirable maiden speakers and others, where freedom is "cabined, cribbed, confined" in every university in the land. I am surprised, in the aftermath of Paris, that no one has yet quoted Voltaire. His words have always been my watchword on this subject: "I may dislike what you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it". Those words should be emblazoned over the door, or gate, of every university in the land. What we need in this year of Magna Carta—noble Lords must forgive my mentioning this yet again—is a charter of freedom for our universities, where young people are told that they must always exercise respect, good manners and tolerance towards those with whom they can perhaps never agree, but with whom they must always be prepared to listen and to debate. And there is no better place to make those points than in your Lordships' House.

We should also bear in mind that when you are dealing with the young, to ban is to provoke. We need a vigorously tolerant society—that is in no sense an oxymoron—where the best of British values are espoused. If I had to sum up British values in one sentence, I would say: the promotion of freedom untrammelled and unconfined.

2.30 pm

Lord Bew (CB): My Lords, I, too, thank my noble friend Lady Deech for her brilliant and complex opening speech. I speak on this subject from the perspective of somebody who has taught on the university campuses in Belfast since 1975, while freedom of speech was most violently contested within the United Kingdom. We had speakers coming to give lectures, such as visiting judges, who were blown up and shot at or had their police guards killed. A law lecturer, Edgar Graham, was shot on the steps of the library—a particular sacrilege, in my view. These events punctuated the life of the university and those assaults were consistent. All the actions I have just described were by the IRA but the loyalist killers had a habit of killing academics at home. My dear friend and departmental colleague Adrian Guelke was shot in his bed and my Irish history colleague Miriam Daly was murdered in her own kitchen.

Even when the violence at that level quietened down for a while and we were able to have, for example, the noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky, visiting Belfast to give an important lecture on his book *Politicians and the Slump*, there was the constant flow of poison-pen, threatening letters to academics. They were anonymous but, again, deeply challenging to the principle of free speech. It was an achievement that somehow or other the principle of a liberal education was kept alive by both universities in this period, in part because academics such as the noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky, were willing to come to Belfast at a dangerous time to speak to our students.

Even in the post 9/11 world and with the coming of peace in Northern Ireland, we are not free from these difficulties. In 2007, the chairman of our Islamic society was one of those who burnt himself to death in the attack on Glasgow Airport, sadly, having made the journey from Belfast to be there. In the last few months, noble Lords will have been aware from coverage in the *Guardian* and elsewhere that the vice-chancellor of my own university made the decision to cancel a meeting in the aftermath of *Charlie Hebdo*. He then reversed it, I am glad to say, following criticism of his failure to protect free speech, but that was again on the evidence of sensitivities.

We have to say frankly that one of the sensitivities is that our university authorities fear being accused of Islamophobia more than they want to consider the implications of terrorist acts. This is not because they are in any way sympathetic to terrorist acts but because they know that they will not be blamed for them. They rightly consider, however, that they might well be blamed for Islamophobia. Their attitude towards the Prevent programme, which has been discussed today, is determined to some degree—let us put it kindly—by a lack of enthusiasm for the programme on the part of the Government, who anyway do not love them enough or give them enough money.

I heard what was said by the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, and very pointedly by the noble Lord, Lord Pannick, about some of the otiose elements of the Prevent programme. In my view, frankly, there have been some impractical and possibly dangerous attempts to intervene in the life of universities. However, I want

noble Lords to consider this. Were the Government to retreat from the underlying principle that the issue is not just terrorist activity but the ideologies which promote terrorism, would that be a good thing, particularly for the balance of forces within the Muslim community?

I am not convinced that the agnosticism which the Government adopted during the long years of the Northern Irish Troubles—as if Irish republicanism of the most militant sort was absolutely fine as long as nobody was killed—really helped the peace process. That was the attitude of the British Government for three decades. In a liberal democracy, we have to consider whether agnosticism about these most central questions at the heart of our thinking is for sure the way forward. It is entirely legitimate to raise issues about an inhibition of free speech as a result of the Prevent programme, but one also has to consider in our discussions the very serious questions the programme attempts to face up to.

I will conclude with this point. I listened carefully to the very important speech of the noble and learned Baroness, Lady Butler-Sloss. I accept the point she made about how important it is, at a time of division, to maintain a dialogue in universities with those people whom one disagrees with. I absolutely accept that universities are a key place for that. During the Troubles, I attempted to maintain a dialogue with IRA prisoners and others who were my students. I am not convinced that anything in the Prevent programme prevents academics carrying on these sensitive dialogues today, even though I accept that the noble Lord, Lord Pannick, raised points of detail which are worrying.

2.36 pm

Lord Judd (Lab): My Lords, as somebody who has been involved in the governance of universities at the LSE, Newcastle and Lancaster for more than 30 years, I strongly welcome this debate and thank the noble Baroness for it. It is an immensely important subject, as the debate has underlined.

First, I would like to raise an issue that to me seems pretty important: what is the purpose of a university? What is the ideal—let us not be afraid of that word—of a university? I suggest to the House that the ideal of a university is a community of scholars seeking truth, hopefully on an interdisciplinary basis, and that to civilised society this is an absolutely indispensable contribution. Universities are coming under a lot of quantitative pressure these days, with measurement here and there of their performance or the other thing. This sees them more and more as a facility for servicing the machine of society as it is.

It is important to say that I am not a Luddite. But what I fear is happening is that we are neglecting the qualitative considerations—the imaginative and visionary considerations—that lead to the originality of thought and research which are the guarantee, in the long term, of the well-being of our society and indeed of its material success. This debate is related to all that because if we are to have a search for truth, you must have controversy. Differences must be brought into the open and people must be encouraged to be brave and put their ideas forward. In the context of argument, discussion and analysis we move forward.

[LORD JUDD]

There will always be those who have very unimaginative, cruel and vicious objectives. Let us hear those views, deal with them in open discussion with confidence and win the argument. We were discussing at some length this morning and this afternoon the Prime Minister's Statement on the possibility of bombing in Syria. This is going to be a very significant issue, but we should not lose sight of the fact that, ultimately, the war—if we must use this negative term, which I hate using—will be won by the battle of the mind. Decent views, civilised views and responsible views have to win the argument. That is how it will be won. We have to be very careful, when we start discussing the rules and regulations of debate in universities, that we are not giving up or losing faith in our own confidence in what makes our society worth having. It would be a damnable outcome of all the tensions, stresses and dangers—and there are huge dangers—that we live under at the moment if we ended up having ourselves destroyed the society we want to have.

2.41 pm

Lord Blair of Boughton (CB): My Lords, I, too, congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Deech. I was sitting next to her when she delivered her speech, and it was fascinating to watch the way the House slowly fell more and more silent listening to what was one of the great parliamentary speeches of this Session. I was slightly alarmed immediately afterwards that by the time that she and the noble Lord, Lord Patten, had finished, they had mentioned the two main points that I was going to speak about. I am of course the last speaker before those charged with answering on behalf of the parties come back in, but I hope that I will have something to say about both the Prevent strategy and Cecil Rhodes.

First, I declare an interest as somebody who has had their own personal demonstration against them attending as a speaker on a campus. It is a great privilege to have had that. I could not express better than the noble Lord, Lord Bew, did the significance of Prevent as a strategy against the advance of violent extremism. It is not without its faults but it is really important. I was at the beginning of the conversations which invented Prevent and everything that followed 7/7. However, I always felt that there was one problem in the heart of the delivery of Prevent, which was the enormous importance given to the police as its delivery agency. The police have two roles: they are in that community meeting, working with people to try and strengthen communities against extremism, but they are the same organisation that then arrives in darkened vans with balaclavas and machine guns and takes away the children of that community. That is a dilemma that can only be made worse if those responsible for other organisations do not join the police in handling Prevent.

Further education and higher education authorities are absolutely vital in that, because they are the first in loco parentis for these young people away from home. If they are not seen to understand the significance of Prevent, it will just be left to the police; and if you do not disagree with the police when you are a teenager and a young adult, you are not really alive. It would be

very wrong for the 500 lecturers who the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, mentioned to try and walk away from their responsibilities in this regard.

In turning to Cecil Rhodes, I make another declaration of interest. I put my old college tie on this morning—the duster from Christ Church. For three years there, where I am now an honorary student, I never noticed when walking past Oriel that the four-foot statue of a man waving a hat was Cecil Rhodes. This is political correctness turned into political madness. There is nothing wrong with political correctness—calling people what they want to be called, whether it is black and minority ethnic, Inuit et cetera—and there is nothing wrong with demonstrations. But to try and reverse or rewrite history is the most ridiculous student practice I can think of—and I have indulged in some myself, so I have some record of that.

If we go down this line, we will have to take down the picture of Henry VIII in the Great Hall at Christ Church, on the basis that he burned first Protestants and then Catholics. Above all, we will have to take down the Roman emperors outside the Sheldonian—grow up please.

2.45 pm

Baroness Sharp of Guildford (LD): My Lords, this has been a very stimulating debate, and along with other noble Lords I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, for a very trenchant and excellent introduction to it. I very much enjoyed the two maiden speeches that we heard today—I found them both enlightening and amusing, which is just what maiden speeches should be. I congratulate the two Members concerned.

Like any good liberal, when it comes to freedom of speech, I refer myself back to JS Mill, who provided us with a very robust defence of freedom of speech. I will quote one of the seminal bits of Mill. It has been quoted often, but it is worth quoting it:

“If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind”.

That is a very interesting view in the context of universities and the arguments that we have been having in the debate in the Chamber today. He then goes on to argue that even if an opinion is false, the truth can be better understood by refuting the error, and that since most opinions are neither completely right nor completely false, allowing freedom of expression allows the airing of competing views as a way of preserving the “partial” truth of various opinions. Freedom of expression, he argues, allows for personal growth and self-realisation.

It is vital for us to recognise that. I could not agree more with the views that have been expressed about how supine so many of our universities—or their administrations—have been in the face of on the one hand the pressures on them from students' unions, resorting constantly to the safety argument, and on the other hand the pressures on them from the Government. As the noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky, said, part of the problem perhaps here has been the Government, in terms of their imposing rules that are too stringent. I shall come back to that point later. What Mill was saying fits in with and echoes very well

all that we have heard today about how important it is that universities should be the places where we allow even extreme views to be argued over and defeated in debate, rather than just arbitrarily silenced.

Mill of course recognised that there is a need for some sort of rule of conduct to regulate the actions of those with extreme views. He proposed that this should hinge on what he called a “very simple principle”, the principle of harm. He says that,

“the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others”.

He then goes on to give an example which I found quite amusing, because it fits in so well with the society in which he lived in the mid-19th century, which saw riots against the Corn Laws. He said that someone should be at liberty at any point to suggest, in a speech or in writing, that corn dealers are starving the poor. Such a view would be acceptable, but it would not be acceptable to express it outside the home of a corn dealer, because this might constitute,

“a positive instigation to some mischievous act”.

This principle of harm has indeed underlain much of the debate since then about the limits of freedom of speech and the balance necessary between protecting this right and others such as: privacy, where we can think back to the debates over Leveson; security, with today’s debates over that and extremism; and democratic equality, for example in the sort of debates we had about women’s suffrage in the first parts of the 20th century. There is no reason to assume that there is something inherent in freedom of speech that it should implicitly trump all these other freedoms.

In the 1980s, Joel Feinberg at Oxford argued that the harm principle set the bar too low and suggested instead an offence principle—which we touched on today. He said you can legitimately prohibit some forms of expression because they are offensive and that the prevention of offensive conduct is properly the state’s business. Others referred to the remark of Onora O’Neill—the noble Baroness, Lady O’Neill—that there is no right not to be offended.

In general, the principle of not causing offence is much more difficult to apply because what is offensive to one person is of course not offensive to another. It seems, too, that in some cases these two principles—one of harm and the other of offence—get mixed up. Take the Germaine Greer case that has been referred to. The “no platform” decision was made basically because it was thought that the views were offensive to the transsexual community, but the justification that the student union provided was based on harm—that it could not guarantee the safety of the speaker or of the meeting. Student unions have used that constant plea for safety, and the risk of harm, when they called for “no platform” decisions. Arguably, our university authorities have given way to that much too readily.

When we first talked about the Prevent strategy, it seemed firmly rooted in this harm principle: we are limiting freedom of speech to maintain security, to prevent impressionable and sometimes vulnerable young people from speakers and activities that might cause them to be drawn into extremism. I share the view of the noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky, that in this sense these

are young adults with the right to their own views and we are perhaps kowtowing too much to the notion that they are vulnerable in the extreme. As the UUK briefing that we received makes clear, attending university, especially where a student leaves home for the first time, involves significant upheaval from existing social and support networks. In some regard, this means that the university has the responsibility—as the noble Lord, Lord Blair, mentioned—of *loco parentis*.

When the noble Lord, Lord Rosser, from the Opposition Benches replied to the debate on the Prevent regulations in September, he stressed the importance of the need,

“to apply common sense and avoid stereotyping”.—[*Official Report*, 17/9/15; col. 2054.]

That is the danger of codifying the harm principle into laws and regulations. In the original draft regulations it was put to us that all speakers going to universities should provide, two weeks ahead of going, a summary of what they would say and any overheads they would use. That got very short thrift around this House, as noble Lords may remember. The noble Baroness, Lady O’Neill, remarked that when she went to speak at universities—as she does very often—she rarely knew the night before precisely what she would say.

From these Benches, we somewhat reluctantly accepted that the new regulations were necessary, partly for the reasons put forward by the noble Lords, Lord Bew and Lord Blair, given this age of terrorism and particularly where social media are so important. We agreed very much that common sense was necessary, and rather regretted the necessity of bringing the regulations forward. We share with UUK the worries about the statement in the guidance that events should be cancelled unless the university authorities are,

“entirely convinced that such risk”—

that is, the risk of people being drawn into terrorism—“can be fully mitigated”. Is that not much too a high a bar to set? Does it really make sense? There will always be some doubts and risks. You can never totally eliminate risk.

I come back to where I began: the best defence of free speech is free speech itself. Universities are institutions where there should be open and inclusive discussion. Their aim is to foster critical thinking among both students and staff. If extremist ideas are to be challenged it is in such an environment. It is vital that we as a society maintain their integrity in this regard.

2.55 pm

Lord Mendelsohn (Lab): My Lords, I congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, on securing this debate. In an utterly remarkable speech—it was compelling and comprehensive—she outlined many issues that found an echo across this Chamber. Indeed, she drew our attention to a remarkable list of incidents and events, set out the very broad responsibilities and duties in legislation that universities must adhere to, and also warned that people using the notion of sermons not speakers allowed for a variety of things to take place that have been difficult. She highlighted perhaps the National Union of Students’ worst years and its identification with Cage. We hope it will not follow that path again. I thank her again for securing this debate. It has been absolutely excellent.

[LORD MENDELSON]

I also welcome the noble Lord, Lord O'Shaughnessy, for his immaculate and impressive speech and on his entry into this House. The noble Lord has had a remarkable career at Policy Exchange and working for the Prime Minister. I have been thoroughly impressed with his work at his new organisation, Floreat Education, and the schools it has delivered. That is truly outstanding. As a former employer of the noble Lord, I am so pleased that I did not say when he handed in his letter of resignation, "You are making a big mistake". He is one of the most thoughtful and imaginative thinkers and an outstanding leader in education. He will make a fantastic contribution to this House and we welcome him hugely.

I also welcome the noble Lord, Lord Trevethin and Oaksey, on his absolutely outstanding maiden speech. He is a very distinguished Silk, and I believe is described in *Chambers* as having a "Rolls-Royce mind". We were given our first drive around in his mind today. I understand that he is a specialist in professional indemnity. He has done a great deal with the investment industry, the pensions industry, tax advisers, auditors and professionals in the financial services industry. I suspect he has been pretty busy these last few years. I hope that his wisdom will come into our House on more occasions. I was very interested in his phrasing, particularly when he referred to the "weaponising of hypersensitivity". These sorts of insight will be great additions to this House. We welcome him warmly.

This has been an extraordinary and outstanding debate with a great deal of agreement, most importantly the firm assertion of the need for freedom of expression—freedom of speech and academic freedom—balanced by a sensible and appropriate restriction to liberty on occasion. I will just make a few observations on freedom of speech, on Prevent and its responsibilities, and on some issues around the future.

Our universities are great places of learning, where contrasting and competing views, with freedom of research, thought and ideas, are generated and debated. They are great places of socialisation into our society and our values. Universities are places where controversial ideas must be able to be heard, debated and challenged. The encouragement, development and nurturing of independent thought is at the heart of the purpose of tertiary education. The process of learning is at the heart of universities. As my noble friend Lady Warwick has said, freedom of speech and the ability to question orthodoxy and present challenging views is its essential purpose.

The principle at the heart of how we should apply this was very well expressed by my noble friend and colleague Lord Rosser when he expressed support for the new Prevent guidance. He stressed the need to apply common sense and avoid stereotyping if the widespread acceptance of the need for these regulations was to be secured. This principle was endorsed by the noble Baroness, Lady Sharp of Guildford, in her excellent speech.

How do we institutionalise common sense? I believe that university leaders need to be more strident advocates of their own positions. We should congratulate them on much of the work that they do. Universities have

many policies and procedures; they take a great deal of care in dealing with some of these most difficult problems. They do not always get the answers right, but it is certainly incorrect to say that they have not taken their responsibilities seriously.

Set against this good practice are some issues around student unions. My noble friend Lady Warwick has made these comments on many occasions and they were echoed very strongly in the House. Warnings about the current approach of the National Union of Students were very well articulated by the noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky. The existence of student union policies and practices which seek to bar lawful free speech causes us deep concern; so do the findings of a survey on the censorship of free speech on campuses earlier this year, which highlighted calls for many organisations to be banned and student unions lobbying for universities to place warnings on course texts which contain anything potentially upsetting. That point was made forcefully by the noble and learned Lord, Lord Brown of Eaton-under-Heywood earlier in this debate.

Listening to and rigorously questioning speakers about controversial issues is vital training for undergraduates and a life skill that universities are uniquely equipped to teach. Banning speakers whose views are antithetical to one particular group undermines the university's role in defending our society's values, which include the freedom to differ or even the freedom to insult.

While I am addressing freedom of speech, I want to address briefly a matter raised by the noble Lords, Lord Leigh, Lord Polak and Lord Lester of Herne Hill, who raised the question of how Israeli academics, Israeli students, Jewish students, Jewish societies and others have been dealt with. This is a matter of great concern to us, particularly as safe space has always seemed to have been denied to this group. I restate the view of my noble friend the shadow Foreign Secretary that the Opposition wholly and totally reject the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement and its objectives; they have no place in our party and no place in our universities. It is not just that they are antithetical to any attempts towards peace in the region in which they profess to play a role, but they are against our values and our notions of what universities should be. It is a source of regret that they appeared.

In this context, I say to my noble friend Lady Bakewell, who also raised this issue, that we compliment the outstanding work of the Pears Institute at her institution. She identified the new antisemitism. The All-Party Parliamentary Group against Antisemitism has also done so and made some recommendations recently about what should be done at universities. Will the Minister address their recommendations in her comments?

Like the noble Lords, Lord Bew and Lord Blair, we support the need for Prevent. The threats are there; they are very real. People from universities have been identified in planning terrorism and have been present among foreign fighters. This is not new. In 1994, the bombing of the Israeli embassy and a Jewish community centre in north London were the product of people who had been at universities. One of those convicted was, I believe, a very strong university activist at

Leicester University. However, the attacks we face now have a very different dimension and it is right that we have Prevent at universities. The noble Lord, Lord Bew, made an important point about complexities and concerns in relation to its implementation. I refer again to the view of the noble Lord, Lord Rosser, that its successful adoption will depend on its careful implementation.

The noble and learned Baroness, Lady Butler-Sloss, made the important point that Muslim students must feel engaged in this. I accept that we must do this, and I also accept, as does our party, that the purpose of Prevent is to drive a very strong wedge to isolate the very small number of Muslim students who wish to adopt this form of behaviour. I would be grateful if the Minister would tell us how the Government see its implementation and any issues or lessons for the future.

On other issues about the future, the noble Lord, Lord Cormack, made a very important point about the internet and the use of social media. We see from some of the language used on these things, the bullying and intimidation, even the way some people's comments are used to great detriment and the way that campaigns are organised, that we are likely to have more rather than less of these conflicts and issues present on our campuses. It is a matter which I hope the university authorities are very alive to, and it means, in my view, that we should support the notions of the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, on what training and other things are required. Training, education, leadership and character are always the sorts of things we should look to continue to instil in our university leaders.

In these challenging times, it is no easy task for universities to identify when the pursuit of freedom of ideas and expression crosses a threshold and becomes extremism or intolerance. We have to make sure that we allow for these views to be confronted, as the noble Lord, Lord Pannick, and my noble friend Lord Judd said. We should not let these fester underground, because it is not just about protecting universities but about defending the strength of our values and our society. We should not, as my noble friend Lord Judd said, lose faith and confidence in our society and our ability to challenge these things; we must always confront them. We must make sure that we do not shy away from our responsibility when it comes to our universities.

3.06 pm

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park (Con): My Lords, as the noble Lord has just said, this has been an extremely interesting and informative debate. I thank all noble Lords for participating, particularly the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, for initiating this debate and for her extremely powerful contribution. I congratulate my noble friend Lord O'Shaughnessy and the noble Lord, Lord Trevethin and Oaksey, on their maiden speeches. It is clear from their contributions today that they are going to be great assets to this House. On a personal note, it was an honour for me to introduce my noble friend a few weeks ago and an added bonus that I get to congratulate him from the Dispatch Box today.

The Government recognise that freedom of speech and academic freedom in universities is a key component in their success. University autonomy from the state

has been a central principle in this country for many hundreds of years, and it is one that this Government respect. The principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech at universities are enshrined in statute, as the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, pointed out. The Education Reform Act 1988 requires universities to ensure,

“that academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions”.

The Education Act (No. 2) 1986 provides that,

“persons concerned in the government of any establishment ... shall take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for members, students and employees of the establishment and for visiting speakers”.

The preservation of autonomy allows universities to fulfil their role in society as places of debate and discussion, where ideas can be tested and developed.

I have no doubt that the strong principle of autonomy in the UK higher education sector is the reason our universities are such a fertile ground for research and the advancement of knowledge. With 1% of the world's population, the UK produces around 8% of the world's academic publications and receives more than 14% of citations with the highest impact. This is a record to be proud of, and to preserve and promote. However, while respecting the importance of freedom of speech and academic freedom at universities, it is also important that the sector acts as a partner of Government in rooting out and challenging extremism. This is an endeavour in which all public institutions have a role to play.

As noble Lords have mentioned, the recent tragic events in Paris have illustrated that the emergence of ISIL presents a heightened threat to our national security. The murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby in May 2013 was a chilling incursion of extremism on to the streets of our own capital, and since then the departure of at least 750 UK-linked people to Syria has provided further grave cause for concern. The intelligence agencies tell us that the threat is now worse than at any time since 9/11.

As part of the response to this threat, we must continue to combat the underlying ideology that feeds terrorism, as the noble Lord, Lord Bew, so powerfully stated. Terrorist groups look to set mood music that is anti-democracy and anti-West and in opposition to debate and freedom. This can be a starting point, but we must try to turn and prevent people being drawn on to that path. This is a challenge for all our community. Schools, universities and colleges are in a unique position to give young people the confidence and ability to challenge extremist ideology robustly. The noble Lord, Lord Skidelsky, rightly pointed out that students are adults and questioned why they need special protection. He is right, but, as the noble Baroness, Lady Sharp, said, the stage of life when many students attend university can also be a particularly vulnerable time for them. Students may have left home for the first time and be cut off from the support networks with which they are familiar, so there is also a duty to protect students against extremist narratives, which can push them towards radicalisation.

In this context, the Government have introduced the Prevent duty, which many noble Lords mentioned today, on a wide range of bodies. Higher education

[BARONESS EVANS OF BOWES PARK]

institutions are covered by the duty, which is part of a broader effort by the education sector. As the noble Lord, Lord Blair, said, it cannot simply be left to the police. We all have to play our part. Schools and colleges have a vital role to play. We are all aware of the disturbing events that came to light last year at several schools in Birmingham. They were catalogued by Peter Clarke in his report published in July 2014. It is important that we address the effects of extreme narratives on students before they arrive at university.

As part of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, which is concerned with reducing the risk of people being drawn into terrorism, Section 26 placed a statutory duty on specified authorities to,

“have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”,

when exercising their functions. As noble Lords are aware, this is referred to as the Prevent duty. The duty came into force in July this year, with the exception of the higher and further education sectors, for which it came into force this September.

The Prevent duty is about protecting people from the poisonous and pernicious influence of extremist ideas used to legitimise terrorism, and making sure that key bodies across the country play their part and work in partnership to do this. The duty is categorically not about oppressing freedom of speech or stifling academic freedom and debate. Indeed, they are keys weapons in our armoury against extremist ideas, a point many noble Lords made. The duty is about making sure that radical views and ideas do not flourish and cannot go unchecked.

How universities and colleges balance the Prevent duty with the need to secure freedom of speech and promote academic freedom is extremely important and, as we heard from several noble Lords, difficult. It is not easy, but freedom of speech has never been an absolute. It has always come with challenges and responsibilities, which is something with which we will always grapple. During the passage of the legislation that placed Prevent on a statutory footing, concerns were raised in this House on behalf of the HE sector about whether this duty would lead to university administrators being overzealous in banning events and speakers. This problem was raised today, and I will return to it shortly. This is in no way the intention of the duty. The legislation makes explicit that in carrying out responsibilities under this duty universities must have regard to their duty to promote freedom of speech.

Striking this balance is clearly not easy, which is why we have worked very closely with the sector and with HEFCE, which will be monitoring compliance with the duty, to make sure that the guidance and advice we give to institutions recognise the need to balance these two things. I pay tribute in particular to Universities UK, which has been an instrumental partner in working through these difficult issues.

There are signs that progress is being made. We know that in 2014 some 70 events took place featuring extremist speakers on and off campus across 30 or more institutions in England and Wales. Due to increased awareness and much better assessment of risk by universities, in part due to better engagement with

Prevent in the run-up to it gaining a statutory basis, that number is significantly lower in 2015. It is vital that we continue to maintain our efforts.

A couple of points were raised by noble Lords. The noble Lords, Lord Pannick and Lord Lester, expressed concerns about the Prevent guidance. We have made clarifications to it to make it more workable for institutions, taking into account responses from the sector during the consultation exercise, but we continue to learn and make sure that the guidance is as clear as it can be. I assure the noble Baroness, Lady Sharp, that we do not expect universities to cancel all events. We expect them to put in place a system for assessing the risks associated with planning events and to take action to mitigate those risks where they are identified. That action may include ensuring that any extremist views are challenged when an event is allowed to proceed. We do not expect universities to be disproportionately risk-averse; they just need to be aware of the dangers and risks. I will be very interested to read the report referred to by the noble and learned Baroness, Lady Butler-Sloss. We are very keen for all views on how we make sure this duty works.

The noble Baronesses, Lady Deech and Lady Sharp, also asked about the Prevent guidance. We will certainly look to ensure that it is practical and helpful to all those who are implementing it. We are continuing to work with Universities UK and others to develop further support and advice that helps universities in this challenging area.

A number of noble Lords raised the approach of the NUS. As I think I have made clear, we believe Prevent is a hugely important part of protecting the welfare of students at universities. We were disappointed by the anti-Prevent motion passed at the NUS conference in March, but we are encouraged by the NUS leadership's subsequent commitment not to work with Cage. I agree with the noble Lord, Lord Mendelsohn, and the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, that at times the NUS has taken a rather inconsistent approach to free speech.

The noble Lord, Lord Pannick, asked about the definition of non-violent extremism. The Bill he was referring to is the counter-extremism Bill. As yet there is no set publication date, so I cannot give him any further information at the moment.

The Prevent strategy is about balancing the principle of freedom of speech at universities with the duty to address the danger of radicalisation. As we have heard today, we have seen student bodies assert that there is also a balance to be struck between the principle of freedom of speech in universities and the need for students of all kinds to feel that their campus is a safe place where prejudice against them will not be tolerated. This endeavour has led to the practice of “no platforming”, as mentioned by the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, the noble Lord, Lord Lester, and others. It is a long-standing policy of the National Unions of Students, which has been an increasing focus in recent months.

The Government's position on this debate is that universities and student unions must make their own decisions on who speaks at their universities. They should do this within the context of clearly set-out policies and procedures. They should weigh up the risks associated with any speaker or event, and take their decision based on those risks.

On discrimination at universities, which no platform in part attempts to address, I am grateful for the chance to reiterate that staff and students from all backgrounds, religions, cultures and communities must be welcome in our higher education sector. The UK has one of the strongest legislative frameworks to protect people from harassment and abuse, especially racial or religious persecution. For example, the Equality Act 2010 protects groups against discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and Part III of the Public Order Act 1986 and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 provide protection against criminal offences related to race. There are other relevant statutes, and organisations such as Universities UK, the Equality Challenge Unit and the National Union of Students have provided helpful summaries of the law that universities and student unions are able to bring to bear in combating discrimination.

Noble Lords raised other specific points. I assure my noble friends Lord Leigh and Lord Polak and the noble Baroness, Lady Bakewell, that the UK Government do not support academic or cultural boycotts of Israel. Indeed, the UK has engaged in 60 years of vibrant exchange, partnership and collaboration with Israel, which does so much to make both our countries stronger. I was very interested to hear about the work of the Pears Institute, which was mentioned by the noble Baroness. I congratulate it on the great work it is doing.

The responsibility for ensuring that students do not face anti-Semitism on campus rests with universities, which have the tools they need to tackle it. Clearly, if anti-Semitic incidents continue or increase, we must look to do more and we will, of course, make sure that we do whatever we can to stop this. Universities UK has undertaken considerable work to promote safer campus communities and support universities in this area and has received direct support from BIS to do so.

As a number of noble Lords mentioned in their comments, no one has the right not to be offended; unfortunately, at times we have seen debates shut down based on limited or no evidence of any safety or welfare risks other than that unpalatable views may be expressed. Having said that, there is a responsibility to ensure that all students feel able to take part in debate free from intimidation. This has not always been the case, and the NUS has a role to play to help ensure that those with the loudest voices and those with the most aggressive and vocal followers are not allowed to silence others.

The noble and learned Lord, Lord Brown, is absolutely right that universities are uniquely placed to provide the intellectual and robust challenge to extremist narratives, and they must continue to do this. However, we have seen incidences on campus when there is no desire for debate, where the speaker will not accept or listen to any challenge, and even where the speaker will not accept a question from women. In these cases the university has to impose conditions on the event.

The principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech in universities are tenets central to our globally successful higher education system. These principles are enshrined in statute but in both cases

the drafting makes clear that these principles must be respected “within the law”. As I have already said, freedom of speech is not an absolute right—it comes with responsibilities and challenges, and it is important to remember that.

The Prevent duty and the support and guidance we give to universities and colleges through our network of Prevent co-ordinators and from within the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills should help universities address the task of promoting these principles of freedom of speech within the law while also recognising the very real and tangible threat we face. In particular, the Prevent strategy ensures that universities act as partners with other public institutions in combating radicalisation and the rise of extremism. Recent events, as I have said, have reminded us how crucial this endeavour is.

Once again I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, for reminding us of both the importance of protecting freedom of speech in universities and the important issues that arise in ensuring this is done within the law, and I thank all noble Lords for their valuable contributions.

3.22 pm

Baroness Deech: My Lords, I have been struck by the consensus across all parties this afternoon on the problems that have arisen in universities. I thank the Minister for her awareness of this. I have also been struck by the wit, wisdom and erudition of our speakers this afternoon and for the quotations they have been able to bring up from their memories, no doubt from their past university education. Not least have I been struck by the expertise and wisdom of our two maiden speakers, who certainly chose the right forum for their maiden speeches and impressed us all with their different perspectives here.

Talking of erudition, it was interesting that we have so many university speakers here, as well as lawyers. It is true that I did a good job of teaching the noble Lord, Lord Pannick, but I also have to confess that in that first tutorial I had that lightbulb moment, which I am sure many tutors here have experienced, when you realise that the student in front of you is cleverer than you are.

I think that four messages have come from the debate this afternoon. One is that Universities UK must be encouraged to demonstrate backbone—if that is one does with backbone. After all, university teachers have been trained and have spent their lifetimes balancing and critiquing, and I would have hoped from a bit more push from the Government to encourage UUK to do its job both in opening up free speech and in observing the law.

The second message is that there are problems with the Prevent strategy, most particularly in relation to definitions. We cannot wait for those definitions—we need them now. Many of the problems that people have pointed out in relation to the Prevent guidance would be resolved if meetings where we suspect extremist speakers are saying unpleasant and illegal things were opened up. I fear that the difficulty is that those speeches take place in a closed environment. The students themselves stop those who want to challenge

[BARONESS DEECH]

the speaker. The meeting may be held in a closed room and open only to certain categories of people. It is essential for the Prevent guidance to work and for extremism to be challenged that we have open meetings where other students can come in a safe environment and have their say as well as the speaker. That would resolve the difficulties we all feel there are with the Prevent guidance.

Finally, we say to Oxford University, “Stiffen your backbone, too, in relation to Cecil Rhodes”. After all, think of the good that has been done with his money. Maybe it was ill-gotten, but we have had more than 100 years of Rhodes scholars, some of whom are here; many others have returned to their countries to be leaders and mentors. As the noble Lord, Lord Blair, said, if we start taking down the statues and images of all those who have offended over the centuries, indeed, this Palace would be stripped bare.

Once again I thank noble Lords for their most interesting and valuable contributions, and I urge the Minister once more to make sure that UUK and the NUS live up to their responsibilities.

Motion agreed.

Counterterrorism: Communities

Question for Short Debate

3.26 pm

Asked by Baroness Mobarik

To ask Her Majesty’s Government, in the light of the attacks in Paris on 13 November, what steps they plan to take to foster links between communities, as part of their counterterrorism strategy.

Baroness Mobarik (Con): My Lords, on Friday 13 November unspeakable horror was visited upon ordinary, predominantly young Parisians as they enjoyed an evening with friends. It was a deliberate act carried out with indiscriminate and callous abandon. The French President rightly described the perpetrators of this crime as psychopathic monsters.

Some have said that this is the world that we should now expect. We are told that what happened in Paris will most likely happen in other European cities, as indeed has been happening in the Middle East and beyond for many years. This “piecemeal” third world war, as Pope Francis has defined it, has no geographic boundaries and is not about religion, although some would have us see it that way. Religion is just a convenient label. This conflict is simply between those who hold humanity as sacred and those who do not.

I was one of the 100,000 who marched in Glasgow to say no to war in Iraq, fearing that it would lead to ever-greater conflict, bloodshed and chaos. I have always believed that peace and dialogue is by far the better path. Yet when ISIL, or Daesh, first began to be mentioned by our news channels, like others I had a sense of dread and foreboding that this was like no other terrorist group before it—that it was a death cult that needed to be eradicated sooner rather than later.

I fear that it is later—and it is certainly too late for the 136 who died in Paris on 13 November, the 44 who died in Beirut the day before, or the 224 who died in the Russian plane over Egypt last month. Add to this the many thousands of Muslims—both Shia and Sunni—and Yazidis and Christians in Syria and Iraq, who have been slaughtered at the hands of Daesh. Sometimes even those of us who are pacifists—and I count myself as one—believe that there is no justification in standing back. But if and when military action is taken, a well-structured plan for reconciliation and reconstruction is crucial.

Whatever the mistakes and differences of the past and whatever else we do, we must stand united against those who would have us be divided. Whenever there is a terrorist attack, Muslims are urged to condemn the terrorists. Ordinary, peaceful, hard-working, law-abiding Muslim citizens of the state are urged to publicly condemn these acts of violence, in a way that the Irish Catholic community was never asked to do when the IRA was bombing our mainland. And Muslim leaders and communities have condemned these acts, openly and publicly, for no right-minded person could ever do otherwise. In fact, most recently, they took out an advert in a national newspaper to condemn the Paris attacks. It represented more than 300 mosques and community groups.

However, if Muslims articulate their heartfelt belief that this bloodlust is nothing to do with their religion, which speaks of peace, love and forgiveness, they are accused of being apologists. This is irresponsible. This accusation only makes people defensive and will only divide us—and Daesh would relish that. Nevertheless, because it is Islam that is being hijacked and misrepresented, there is an obligation on Muslims to speak out. Islam teaches that the middle path is the best and that extremes of any kind are wrong.

The threat that we all face requires a collective response. Blaming this, that and the other, or indeed each other, is no longer an option. The “them and us” that some of our citizens subscribe to must come to an end. The consequences of discord affect all of us.

This is not the time for prejudice; the stakes are far too high. Each of us—Muslims, Christians, Jews, members of any other religion and of none—must examine our own prejudices and levels of intolerance, which clearly do exist. Throughout my life, I have made it a duty to point out intolerance whenever I recognise it, whether from people of my own religious background or of any other.

The goal has to be that everyone feels that they are a citizen of the state and a stakeholder. Remaining in silos is not the way forward. People can hold on to their faith and cultural heritage while being part of the mainstream—that is what makes the United Kingdom so special. Most of us have multiple identities and there is no conflict in that. In fact, it is enriching and can be an asset. It is for strong voices within local communities to interact with each other and give clear and positive messages of trust and respect.

The great efforts made by this country and the raft of race relations and equality legislation over the last five decades have meant that people have been able to integrate in a way that has not been possible in other

European countries. We enjoy freedom and security to live our lives and to worship in the way that we please. But with that freedom and security comes a duty and a responsibility. We can see around us, in the chaos that exists elsewhere, that what we have has to be safeguarded and cherished, and that we all have a part to play. It is incumbent on all of us that we reach out and try to understand each other's perspective, fears and concerns.

The challenge is for us all: not just politicians and the police but also schools, universities, faith groups, charitable organisations, factory workers, even fishermen on the high seas—and the media. The media arguably have the biggest role of all. Now is not the time for sensationalism. It is a time for responsibility, unlike the actions of a certain tabloid newspaper which recently reported false statistics to deliberately vilify the Muslim community. This has been happening even as far back as pre-9/11, when the media gave much airtime to extremists such as Abu Hamza, never clarifying that he was preaching outside Finsbury mosque because the rational, moderate majority had thrown him out. When the media falsely associate such extremists with mainstream Islam, they do no favours in respect of community cohesion.

One of the most sinister aspects of current-day extremism is the way that the internet has become a tool with which to spread poisonous ideologies. The Government's *Counter-Extremism Strategy*, published last month, addresses this issue and points out that groups such as Daesh or neo-Nazi and extreme right-wing groups are using the internet in ever-more sophisticated ways to disseminate their propaganda. The neo-Nazi website, Stormfront, is often described as the first website dedicated to racial hatred. Companies that are involved in social media provision have an obligation to identify and eradicate extremist material on the internet.

Statistics prove that there has been a rise in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in recent times. Last week, in Scotland, the deputy chief constable announced that 64 examples of Islamophobic abuse were reported to the police in the week after the Paris attacks. When there is a rise in such incidents, there is also an inadvertent effect on other communities, such as the Sikh community, because some that harbour resentments and prejudice cannot differentiate between different faith groups.

I am heartened to read that the Government will be supporting those who wish to put forward mainstream views and empowering internet users to report extremist content. Perhaps the Minister can tell us more about the Government's aim to assist particular projects for funding and to provide social media training and technical assistance to counter the extremist narrative. I welcome this initiative but would caution that we must monitor such funding closely. What we do not need is negativity arising from any misappropriation of funds.

What is required most of all is action at grass-roots level, not just official reports. I am aware that much work is being done in consultation and collaboration with groups and individuals at a local level. This recognises the diversity within the Muslim community. What is required in conjunction with these initiatives

is encouragement for every citizen to help foster links between communities and faith groups and to join in a movement for greater unity. Then we can begin to overcome the challenge of our age.

3.37 pm

Lord Harris of Haringey (Lab): My Lords, I am grateful to the noble Baroness, Lady Mobarik, for introducing this debate and giving us an opportunity to debate this important topic. However, having said that, the wording of the question, although not the content of the noble Baroness's speech, is wrong. The premise behind it is wrong, as indeed are the premises behind so much of the Government's counterextremism strategy. "Fostering links between communities" in this country is the right policy, but it should not be seen as just a by-product of counterterrorism strategy. It should be seen as part of building a harmonious society. It will be counterproductive if it is seen as only as a response to terrorism.

I spent 24 years as an elected politician in Haringey, where two-thirds of the population and 70% of the young people come from ethnic minority backgrounds—collectively they are not a minority, they are the overwhelming majority. I was an elected member of the London Assembly representing two other London boroughs: Brent, which at the time was the most ethnically diverse local authority area in the country; and Harrow, which was the most religiously diverse. Indeed, most of my life has been spent trying to foster and nurture positive relationships between communities. That is something all of us in public life should do all the time, and all public agencies should see it as part of their duty. It should be part of that duty not just in the immediate aftermath of, or as a response to, a terrorist atrocity, whether here or elsewhere.

Seven years ago, I led a major inquiry into public attitudes to counterterrorism policing. Some memories from that inquiry stand out very strongly in my mind, such as the message—repeated in different contexts and different groups—from students and young people who said, "Don't just take an interest in us and come to us when you want information about terrorism. You need to be there all the time supporting us with our problems". The lesson for police and politicians is that they must not be fair-weather friends to particular communities. They should not just make contact when they need the help of that community. They should be there all the time, whatever the circumstances.

What is more, the only way that the police will be able to build community confidence, so they have the trust of the community that will bring intelligence and support when action has to be taken, is through that constant presence and investment of time and energy—sorting out the ordinary day-to-day problems of particular communities. The police must not be an occupying force, whizzing about in cars and responding to incidents. They should be there for the day-to-day concerns of communities—the problems in the corner shops and on the streets, or perhaps thefts from student lodgings.

That is why neighbourhood policing has been so important. It is so tragic that it has been almost dismantled in London in the past year or so. Before the Minister dusts off the quotation from the Prime Minister the other day, I should say that I think he was

[LORD HARRIS OF HARINGEY]

presented with misleading statistics about the extent of neighbourhood policing and the numbers involved. In the Metropolitan Police area, which has dominated the statistics across the country, the definition of what is a neighbourhood police officer has been dramatically changed to include all the response police officers concerned.

The message is very clear. If we want community confidence, if we want communities to have links and be part of a harmonious wider community and society, we have to be there all the time for them, supporting those interests and working with them all the time. That goes for the police and all of us in public life.

3.41 pm

Baroness Hussein-Ece (LD): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Mobarik, for securing this important and timely debate. I have a few comments about some of things she touched on. Over the years, Muslims in Britain have spoken out against terrorism with one voice, even though many of us feel very strongly that we cannot possibly have any responsibility for or connection with barbaric ideologies like Daesh. However, every time there is another atrocity, the UK's 2.7 million Muslims are put under greater scrutiny and held somehow responsible. That is tragic.

Articles are written, often by rational, eminent people, calling on Muslim leaders and the community to condemn these attacks. I condemn them. We all do. Any rational person would, like the vast majority of people from my background and others. But I condemn them as a member of our society, community and the human race, not because of my faith or background, whatever that may be. If I am asked to apologise or condemn these attacks, that tells me there must be a suspicion that I am somehow sympathetic. That is a growing problem within the wider Muslim communities. These terrorists have no faith. They have no humanity and no religion. Let us be clear about that.

As the noble Baroness said, unlike other European countries, we have an excellent record in good community cohesion and inter-faith work. We have a very positive record, unlike France, where 70% of the prison population is Muslim.

If we are to talk about counterterrorism, we have consistently argued that the best counterterrorism strategy involves upholding our values, freedoms and civil liberties, but at the same time promoting greater community cohesion, without turning the spotlight on minority communities in a way our enemies would like us to do. Doing so risks alienating those already vulnerable and more socially excluded members of society, and their being groomed and drawn into those fringe ideologies.

Global terrorism-related events cause a sharp spike in hate crime and physical attacks on members of our communities. We have seen yet again a rise in race attacks on people of the Muslim faith, post the terrible events in Paris. I felt anger and then dread when I heard what had happened in Paris. I felt anger at the terrorist attacks against all those ordinary people who were murdered there—and then dread came at the predictable and almost certain ripple effect and backlash against Muslim communities here in the UK.

We rightly say that our values—promoting the rule of law, participation in and acceptance of democracy, equality, free speech and respect for minorities—are very important; they underpin our society. However, we put that at risk if we do not do more to ensure that everyone who is a citizen feels that they belong and do not feel ostracised. Tell MAMA is a helpline which records that attacks against British Muslims since 13 November have gone up by a reported 300%. The majority of those are women and girls, and sadly, they report that most people look on and do very little to intervene.

The noble Baroness, Lady Mobarik, mentioned some of the reporting in the media. Noble Lords may have seen the cartoon in the *Daily Mail* depicting Syrian refugees—gun-toting women in Burkas—surrounded by rats coming into Europe. Does the Minister condemn that kind of reporting and those depictions of refugees—human beings? How does it help our society when the media behave that way? How have we come to this?

Time is pressing, so I shall end by quoting President Obama:

“We will not give in to fear, or start turning on each other, or treating some people differently because of religion or race or background”.

He also said:

“That’s precisely what terrorists like Daesh want, because ultimately, that is the only way that they can win”.

I hope the Government, working with faith groups, communities, and NGOs, will also keep this message at the forefront in the difficult weeks and months ahead.

3.46 pm

Baroness Eaton (Con): My Lords, I declare my interest as chairman of the charity Near Neighbours. There is no doubt that we are living in worrying and distressing times, and I thank my noble friend Lady Mobarik for facilitating this debate today.

It is, of course, important that where necessary there is a military response to violent extremism and that we build robust security and intelligence services. But we also need to do the work of building relationships between communities in neighbourhoods. Integration is the best antidote to radicalisation, with all communities and individuals having a sense of being able to invest in building British society.

Previous policies, such as multiculturalism, have created a climate of separation. We now need actively to build relationships across communities with different views of living together well. There is a significant consensus on integration that is contrary to the commonly held view that suggests that there is great opposition to it. This consensus on integration is held across the country, so we need to see integration as an important policy objective. In Sunder Katwala's research, *The Integration Consensus: British Future 2014*, 83% fully agreed and only 3% disagreed with the following statement:

“To belong to our shared society, everyone must speak our language, obey our laws and pay their taxes—so that everyone who plays by the rules counts as equally British, and should be able to reach their potential”.

The Church of England's Near Neighbours programme, supported by the Department for Communities and Local Government, has been building

links across communities for the past five years. The Near Neighbours programme has reached more than 1.3 million people, encouraging the individuals taking part to work together on social action projects in their community. Such community projects create trust between individuals. When individuals in communities trust each other, it becomes possible to tackle extreme voices. It strengthens the capacity of local people and communities to respond to their own needs, building up social cohesion using relational methods. This approach builds relationships and attracts and uses co-option to bring about change.

I would like to share just a few brief examples of Near Neighbours projects with your Lordships. Rabbi Tanya and Sajid together teamed up a synagogue and a Muslim charity to feed the homeless in Nottingham; a Muslim and a Jew are prospering in peace as they work to make their community stronger.

In east London, the programme has brought together a rabbi and a group of young Muslim men to talk about Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. In Bradford, the synagogue was about to close as the roof needed repairs. The congregation did not have the money to pay for the work. The members of the mosque and the synagogue met through a Near Neighbours project. Now, the local mosque has funded the repairing of the synagogue roof, which I think must be one of the most unusual combinations to imagine—but it has happened, much to our delight. There are many other projects, involving Christians, Hindus and people of other faiths and none, but there is not time to mention them all.

Community approaches such as Near Neighbours tackle the root of the problem of extremism. They are about changing hearts and minds. They therefore create a sustainable way forward and need to be part of the response to the Paris attacks. It is separation that makes hate possible, because people do not have a real human interaction with others who are different, and it is hate that makes violence possible: it allows people to dehumanise others. We have to tackle the violence through security measures, but we need also to tackle the hate and separation. It is much better when it is tackled through good community relations, where myths can be challenged and human encounter can do its work, helping people to recognise that they may have differences but that they have a great deal in common, not least sharing a common humanity.

3.51 pm

The Lord Bishop of Rochester: My Lords, I, too, am very grateful to the noble Baroness, Lady Mobarik, for initiating the debate and for the opportunity to speak in it. I am grateful, too, to the noble Baroness, Lady Eaton, for saying some of the things about Near Neighbours that I might have said. That will save me having to do it. It is good to have other advocates of these things.

The point has been made already, not least by the noble Lord, Lord Harris, that the important issues raised in the debate, although perhaps prompted by part of the current world situation, have been there for many generations. Many of us have been working away at them for a good many years. None the less, one of the strands in the Government's counterterrorism strategy, published last month, has been the building

and strengthening of community links within and between communities. It is a very important strand that clearly builds on things that many of us have been involved in before. In many ways it is the most difficult strand, because it requires perseverance and hard work over many years. It requires commitment in local communities and all the things that lead to fruitful engagement.

This is an area of life in which the language of religious faith and identity are often used, even when, as has been pointed out already, the connection with any true religion is somewhat tenuous at best. The rabbi, the noble Lord, Lord Sacks, commented on this very cogently in his recent book *Not in God's Name*, which I commend to noble Lords if they have time to read it. Religious beliefs may, in some cases, be stated as givens, but religious practice, including what we might call deviant religious practice, is actually nurtured within our communities—in families, in neighbourhoods and in other settings. Therefore, as has already been said, it is this local work in communities and neighbourhoods that is key in dealing with this dimension of these issues.

As we know, the challenges are significant: issues of segregation and separation, not least in some of our cities, are still there, with the need to break down barriers of mistrust. There are some very real issues of leadership capacity in some of our communities. That is an area where investment, not so much of money but of training and development and those kinds of things, could reap benefits; it already does in some instances. Particular attention has already been given to the invidious position in which some of the leaders of our Muslim communities are put at times. Proper support and development of the skills of leaders such as those is important.

I do not think that anyone has yet mentioned the particular issues around young people. Again, that is clearly something of huge importance. Investment in that, not just of money but of time and attention at the local level, is very important in addressing the matters before us.

These issues are tackled most fruitfully and effectively at local levels, where time and commitment can be given to building trust, often over generations as people live alongside one another and as they get to know one another. The Near Neighbours initiative, to which the noble Baroness has already referred, is one such example which the Church of England has been pleased to sponsor through the Church Urban Fund and which would welcome support from the Government. That initiative is having an effect in many different places in the country; some examples of its work have already been given.

I will also mention the work of my right reverend friend the Bishop of Birmingham, who has taken the initiative to convene regular conversations between the leading faith leaders in the city of Birmingham. Clearly, that is a city where that kind of work is really important. I worked there myself for 18 years and it is close to my heart.

We on these Benches assure this House of our continuing commitment to work for the building of trust, understanding and practical collaboration within

[THE LORD BISHOP OF ROCHESTER]

and between communities throughout our land. We will play our continuing part in building strong communities between people of different faiths and backgrounds.

3.55 pm

Lord Sheikh (Con): My Lords, I thank my noble friend Lady Mobarik for initiating this very important debate. I have met and spoken with many people across the Muslim community in recent months, and subsequently prepared a detailed report setting out various issues affecting the Muslim community and suggesting appropriate action to be taken. The report has been sent to my noble friend the Minister as well as my noble friend Lady Williams of Trafford, the Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

There are various factors that lead to someone becoming radicalised. They include alienation, socioeconomic factors, objections to foreign policy and a warped grasp of ideology. The small minority of young people who are radicalised are on the fringes of society. We must tackle youth alienation and give young Muslims a stake in society. Around 50% of Muslims are under the age of 25. It is imperative that we set up a mechanism to engage with them. In my report, I talked about the best ways of engaging with the young, but because of time constraints I cannot elaborate on these points further.

There are prevailing concerns posed to us by the radicalisation of a tiny minority of young Muslims and these need to be addressed on two fronts. We must do more to prevent such radicalisation to begin with; and for those who have been radicalised and then return from abroad, we must develop a mechanism for dealing with them. Mosques must become more than just a place of worship; they must be used as a tool of integration for the Muslim community. I have connections with mosques that are actively undertaking this.

The Government need to understand the Muslim community's concern about the Prevent strategy and its effectiveness. Muslims are not convinced that the Government's counterterrorism strategy is working. It needs to be overhauled, with participation from the Muslim community. Furthermore, I urge the Government to undertake adequate research before proscribing any individual or organisation.

There has been an increase in the number of hate crimes directed towards Muslims. I am a patron of an organisation that is taking measures to combat this. We much appreciate what the police have started to do, but the Government need to reassure the community that they are tackling this problem. They must take a holistic approach and work in conjunction with the community, local authorities, schools, universities, prison authorities and the police to deal with issues concerning Muslim communities.

Mosques and imams also have a role to play. We must take steps to understand and combat radicalisation, including utilising social media, and for this the Government must work with organisations that can do this effectively. Some imams need further training to be effective. I am supporting a programme that undertakes this.

Deprivation among the Muslim community is a key concern. Almost half the British Muslim population live in the 10% most deprived areas. Socioeconomic status plays an important role in determining outcomes of education, employment prospects and health. We need to address these issues of deprivation among Muslims.

There is also widespread misunderstanding about Islamic principles. We must set up an initiative to tackle misconceptions about Islam. There are 1.6 billion Muslims in the world, and I must emphasise that Islam is, indeed, a religion of peace. There are around 3 million Muslims in the UK and they have contributed significantly to our country in all walks of life. We must remember and respect the positive aspects of British Muslims.

I conclude by saying that we must all unite to combat extremism.

4 pm

Lord Stone of Blackheath (Lab): My Lords, only last week, I chaired a meeting here on the estate of the Joseph Interfaith Foundation, where, for the first time, the President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and a senior imam of a major UK mosque shared a public platform. We discussed Jewish-Muslim relations with senior rabbis and imams, civic leaders from both communities, academics and university students. The atmosphere and fellowship were palpable and warm and we are now co-operating on many fronts.

Also, two years ago, when, having been daubed with graffiti by the EDF, the north London community centre of the Bravanese Islamic community from south-east Somalia was burned down in an arson attack, Rabbi Miriam Berger's community at Finchley synagogue agreed to host them throughout Ramadan. We here were able to make it safe for them, with the help of our noble friend Lord Dear and his security contacts. The communities, in coming together, got on so well that we asked a former colleague of mine from Marks & Spencer, Tom Nathan, who now manages Brent Cross shopping centre, to allow us to put on a bhaji and bagel party there for the two communities, who now happily shop as one.

On a broader platform involving young people, to counterbalance the hostility in social media, a Palestinian, Joana Osman, and an Israeli, Ronny Edry, founded Peace Factory to build communities online, particularly across borders where people cannot physically meet. They connect people, giving them a voice and a face in a safe space where they can become friends in their online world. These young people are showing us the way to foster links globally.

With the help of your Lordships, I would like to suggest a way to foster global links collectively at leadership level to promote a counterterrorism strategy. The terrorist issue involves economics, politics and security, yes, but, of course, religion and faith, whether genuine or distorted, are also involved. Recently, His Holiness the Dalai Lama clarified for me the three aspects or levels within all religions and faiths, and even secular mindfulness. First, there is a total agreement that the basis of humanity is compassion and we are all one. Secondly, there are mutually agreed differences of philosophy—for example, on the nature and existence

of God and the afterlife. Thirdly, there are contentious cultural barriers and customs, such as Kashrut and halal in some, dress codes in others and varying moral standards.

Perhaps the leaders of all the major religions, philosophies and wisdoms could come together in one place urgently now, as a grand coalition if you like, to emphasise the mutual spiritual underpinning of all faiths, and then agree on their political differences but strive to find a consensus and agree on a joint statement that nullifies the claim that terrorism has a religious justification. So, on the first level, they declare their unanimity in the belief that we are all one, and all agree with the golden rule that one should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself. On the second level, where there are subtle philosophical differences, each will explain how this golden rule is true but with a difference in their own philosophy. On the third level, where religion begins to impinge on politics and law and there is not agreement on cultural traditions, each religious leader, citing their own scripture and teachings of their own historical masters, can absolutely negate the cultural or political justification for terrorism. In this way, it can be made clear that we should all respect each other with our differences because we know that in reality we are all one. Perhaps a practical step might be for them to agree to build a world peace centre at the base of Mount Sinai, as the late President Anwar Sadat suggested. It might be a good place for them to have this meeting.

Her Majesty's Government must foster global links between communities as part of a counterterrorism strategy. In times of terror we can choose to respond with fear or with compassion, and our response will determine our future and our freedom. To continue to survive, the human race should come together compassionately to reject any justification for terrorism.

4.05 pm

Lord Suri (Con): My Lords, I join the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Rochester and my noble friend Lord Sheikh in thanking our noble friend who initiated this debate, and those who have participated in it.

Terrorism strategy is not an easy task. The Government are doing their best to tackle this issue. But the attacks in Paris on 13 November show that this is getting worse and getting out of hand. To foster links between the communities is a step in the right direction, but we have to think deeper. Why is terrorism spreading like wildfire and not being controlled?

There are many examples in the world of people who have resolved conflicts by peaceful means, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and many more such noble persons. I happened to meet the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader, on his recent visit to the UK. He invited questions from the guests at the reception. I sent him a short written question: how can we see the end of terrorism? His thoughtful one-word reply was, "Education". Education starts at home and a child can start learning while in his mother's womb.

Last week, a reader's comment on the *Daily Telegraph* website said that, "not all Muslims are terrorists but all terrorists are Muslims".

Islam is a peaceful religion. In Arabic, "Islam" means peace—like "shalom" in Hebrew or "shanti" in Hindi. The Muslim community should take a lead in talking to these people and should educate them to stop treading on this dangerous path and lead a good life. If they have any concerns, they should come forward and talk to the community or to their parents.

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, said five and a half centuries ago that the human race is the image of God—our maker, whatever name you may call it. He is not locked in any cupboard or anywhere. He lives in you. Search your heart and try to find who you are. Why kill the image of God? Why kill innocent people? He preached that we should always pray for the welfare of the whole of mankind.

4.08 pm

Baroness Hamwee (LD): My Lords, I, too, thank the noble Baroness for giving us this opportunity. Like others, I do not link the components of the title of the debate in the way that they might be read.

Inevitably, events in Paris and Brussels have a greater impact than those in, say, Beirut or Tunis—or Nigeria, which saw almost a quarter of the deaths caused by terrorist activity last year. One of the impacts is how "others" in the UK are perceived. I heard yesterday of a teenage boy at a football club who was found by his coach in tears. He had been abused because of Paris. The language of anti-Muslim prejudice seems to have changed from "groomers" and "paedos" post-Rotherham to "terrorists" and "bombers". That was a boy who, with his family, had managed to get out of Syria. It seems to me that any non-white person is now liable to be categorised as a Muslim and to be abused on that basis.

I am not aware that the counterterrorism strategy embraces support for teachers and others in that sort of situation, as distinct from using them as a reporting and enforcement agency. Nor am I aware that it is capable of identifying vulnerable young people who may be victims of grooming for different purposes, of which terrorism is one. At this point, I say, too, that I am concerned about issues of trust and confidentiality, and about information gained under Prevent being using for prosecutions. I am sure that this point and others got a very good airing in the previous debate.

Attacks are mainly against visible Muslim women in traditional dress. Is it that men perceive that women can be very influential? I think we are. I recently attended the launch of an organisation called Nisa-Nashim, a Jewish-Muslim women's network supported by the Government. I, too, pay tribute to the various women's and other community groups that work towards community cohesion. Maintaining grass-roots and community activity will be all the more important if or when the UK's activity in the Middle East increases.

I think it is unhelpful to talk of "British values", and I say that very seriously. According to the Government, extremism is vocal or active opposition to British values. The values listed are by no means exclusively British, and I believe that the phrase turns this into a political definition. "British" in this context is not cohesive.

I am no psychologist but I should like the Minister to assure me that the Government are putting effort

[BARONESS HAMWEE]

and energy into analysing why different individuals and perhaps cohorts are susceptible to being attracted to extremism—especially extremist action. This is intrinsically important, of course, but it is important, too, because we know that alienation is such a good recruiting sergeant.

I think that I just have time to say that there was a time when, in my circles, being labelled as “radical” was a compliment.

4.12 pm

Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Lab): My Lords, I join other noble Lords in congratulating the noble Baroness, Lady Mobarik, on securing this Question for Short Debate.

All of us were appalled at what we witnessed in Paris recently. We stand in solidarity with the French people and fully support the British Government and the full remit of the security services in their efforts to assist the French authorities and ensure that we are protected here in Britain.

The noble Baroness’s Question is important because it is about the fostering of good community links and the celebration of difference. It is also about being a multiracial, multifaith democracy where you can live in freedom, make a contribution to your community and be respected for who you are, no matter what the colour of your skin is or which faith you are of, including being of no faith. The noble Baroness was right to talk about all of us speaking out against intolerance and having a duty to understand different points of view. By coming together we will face down extremism wherever it comes from, be it neo-Nazism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism or Islamist extremism. Strong institutions in the public and voluntary sectors and in civil society in general are vital in challenging extremism in all forms and preventing people being drawn into terrorism. My noble friend Lord Harris of Haringey was right when he spoke of the need for the police and others to work with communities on a day-to-day basis to build confidence and not just to appear when information is needed.

Faith groups provide vital leadership in combating extremism, promoting dialogue between different groups and bringing people together. I recall the excellent work undertaken by Reverend Graham Shaw at St Paul’s in Walworth when I was a councillor in Southwark many years ago. As someone brought up in the Catholic faith, I can say I saw first-hand the excellent work that the Church of England and Reverend Shaw undertook in bringing the community together and challenging attitudes. The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Rochester referred to the work that he had undertaken over many years, which had led to fruitful engagement. I have been impressed by the work of the Inter Faith Network, which works to advance public knowledge, the mutual understanding of different faith communities and the promotion of good relations between people of different faiths in the country at national and local level.

Faith groups themselves need good governance programmes to develop resilience to extremism and deliver proper engagement with young people. It will be helpful to the House if the Minister can explain the

work that the Government are doing in this area to support faith communities, as they are a vital part of overall plan to fight against terrorism and extremism. What specific support did the Government give in Inter Faith Week, which was held last week?

Schools are a focal point in our communities where young people come together to learn, and they must be places where good values are in evidence. The school community can help to build a strong and safe wider community that protects vulnerable people. There have been examples where this has not been the case, and we must be on guard against the influence of extremists in future. Does the Minister believe that we have got the balance right in protecting young people at school, or is there possibly more work that needs to be done?

I agree with the noble Baroness, Lady Mobarik, that social media has been an area where extremist views have grown. The Government must take firm action there.

I agree with the noble Baroness, Lady Hussein-Ece, when she said that the depiction of the Muslim community by some national newspapers was wrong, untrue and unhelpful in bringing communities together and making us all safer. I say to the noble Baroness, Lady Mobarik, that coming from an Irish Catholic family and growing up in London in the 1970s bore its own challenges. I thank the noble Baroness for bringing this Question before the House for debate today.

4.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport and Home Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon) (Con): My Lords, I am pleased to respond to this debate on behalf of the Government. I thank my noble friend Lady Mobarik for raising this important issue at a very appropriate time, and congratulate her not only on securing this debate but on her excellent contribution. It reflected the quality of the debate that we have had today, albeit briefly, and I am sure that this is a subject that we will return to.

I am sure that I speak for every Member of this House and beyond when I say that at this juncture our thoughts go out to all those who have been affected by the horrific attacks we have seen recently in Paris, Beirut, Mali and, most recently, Tunisia, and indeed to all those who have suffered from terrorist attacks across the world. We in Britain, across the country, irrespective of who we are, where we came from or what religion we are, stand together in condemning these attacks. We stand as one community, one nation, united with one another.

Following the attacks in Paris, I personally spoke to many members of different communities to reassure them that the Government stand with them, and I know that the police and local authorities have been engaging with communities who may live in fear of right-wing reprisals. Those communities need to be provided with reassurance. I praise all those who have worked very hard to continue to bring communities together and condemn any attempts to divide our society.

Let me be very clear that, as other noble Lords have said, not least my noble friends Lady Mobarik and Lord Sheikh, that the attacks we have seen across the

world, and across the Channel, have nothing to do with Islam, a religion that is followed peacefully by millions of people around the world. Those attacks have been rightly and strongly condemned; the heinous acts that we saw in Paris and Africa and that we see in the Middle East have been rightly condemned by all—yes, including Muslims, not just in Britain but beyond. As the Home Secretary and indeed the Prime Minister have made clear, none of us want to see, and none of us will tolerate, any sort of backlash against any part of the community as a result of the attacks. The terrorists may seek to divide us, but they will fail.

Before I go any further, a number of noble Lords have drawn attention to the point that my noble friend asked about: the Government's counterterrorism strategy, Contest. Our counterterrorism work aims to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from terrorism, including from the extremist views on which terrorism draws. The Prevent strategy, which has been talked about, was clear that this work must be done in conjunction with the communities. I assure the noble Lord, Lord Harris, that the work that was done previously continues with this Government. To give noble Lords some insight, and to answer the noble Lord, Lord Kennedy, about the level of government support, last year alone the Government and local authorities worked together with just under 40,000 people, reaching those targeted by extremists and terrorist ideologies. Many others throughout the communities work tirelessly without financial support.

However, terrorism is not the only harm caused by extremism. The Government have been clear to make that distinction with the launch of our counter-extremism strategy. To those who wish to see the intent behind the strategy, I give the following quote:

"Whether you are Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, Christian or Sikh, whether you were born here or born abroad, we can all feel part of this country and we must now all come together and stand up for our values with confidence and pride".

Those are the words of the Prime Minister, spoken in July of this year. The Government continue to emphasise the important work that we are doing with faith and civic communities. We must do everything we can to protect the society we have built together. As my noble friend Lady Eaton rightly pointed out, a project such as Near Neighbours is a shining example of how communities of different faiths can come together to ensure that the society in which they live benefits from the actions of all.

Our country is built on values. The noble Baroness, Lady Hamwee, talked about stating British values. Our strategy and the words of all Ministers reflect the fact that these are shared human values: respect, tolerance and democracy. These unite us and help our society to thrive. But let us accept the basic fact that they are increasingly challenged by extremists who seek to spread hatred and division. That is why the Government launched their counter-extremism strategy in October. It is our intention to protect society and safeguard individuals from the influence of extremists, in partnership—I emphasise this—with communities.

As the Minister responsible for this at the Home Office, let me assure noble Lords that our strategy is based on these fundamental pillars: building a partnership with all those opposed to extremism, both at home

and abroad; disrupting the activities of extremists; countering extremist ideology; and building and continuing to strengthen our cohesive communities. It will challenge extremism in all its forms, violent and non-violent—those who seek to hijack Islam and those neo-Nazis who seek to divide societies. Let us be quite clear: tragically, when we see terrorist acts it is the Muslims, not just in this country but overseas, who are too often the victims of extremism and terrorism. We are determined to take direct action to protect British Muslims and everyone in society.

The noble Baroness, Lady Hussein-Ece, condemned the media images that she saw. I join with her in condemning such images. These are the very images which I am sure we all condemn. Indeed, in the light of the events which have taken place in Paris, the Home Secretary has once again emphasised that this should not reflect on our role in helping those who need help. I am proud of the role that Britain plays in helping refugees, not just from the Syrian crisis but from the crises that we have seen before. We have done this historically—it is our legacy—and we continue to do it today, as we will in future.

My noble friends Lord Sheikh and Lady Mobarik also mentioned rising anti-Muslim hatred. I assure noble Lords that the Government, as many will know, recently announced that anti-Muslim hate crime will be recorded as a specific hate crime by the police, across all forces in England and Wales, from April next year. This will help us to focus attention on that important issue, but it is important that that message resonates across all communities. We have to be intolerant of intolerance.

We know that extremists, whoever they are, use a twisted narrative of grievance and conflict to draw people in. Those who hijack Islam supposedly present a view that there is an incompatibility between liberal democracy and their perverse interpretation of Islam. They promote an idea of "the war on Islam", while the neo-Nazis try to drive a core hatred of minorities. In the counter-extremism strategy, we have stated that we will challenge those perverse ideologies head on, showing them for what they are: baseless and inaccurate.

I am pushed for time because of the notable contributions that we have had. The right reverend Prelate talked about the excellent work being done in Birmingham, which I have seen first-hand. I have seen that at the Joseph Interfaith Foundation. The noble Lord, Lord Stone, always speaks in positive terms, which I think we all welcome, about the experiences of faith groups and how we share those together. To counter extremist ideologies, we must confront and challenge extremist propaganda. I assure noble Lords we are committed to working with individuals and groups across the country which are already speaking out against extremism, and we will support them to increase their impact within the community. Finally, I assure noble Lords that we will consult on all the measures within the proposed counter-extremism strategy. A cornerstone of this is partnership and building cohesive communities.

Once again, I thank my noble friend Lady Mobarik for securing this debate. The Government welcome any opportunity to debate this important subject. To

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 defeat extremists, we must stand together and work in partnership with communities. In doing that, let us also celebrate the country we are: from the Big Iftar to Sadaqa Day, from Mitzvah Day to Sevah Day, from the minarets of mosques to the steeples of churches, to the gurdwaras and mandhirs that we see today in Britain. That is a celebration of what we are as a nation. Against those who seek to divide us, we will unite as one nation. As the Prime Minister himself has said, we will face this challenge head on and we will prevail.

Health

Motion to Take Note

4.26 pm

Moved by Lord Crisp

To move that this House takes note of the case for building a health-creating society in the United Kingdom where all sectors contribute to creating a healthy and resilient population.

Lord Crisp (CB): My Lords, first, I thank my noble friends on the Cross Benches for choosing this debate today, but I also thank all noble Lords who are taking part in it. I am very much looking forward to hearing everybody's contributions. I recognise that this is last business on a Thursday, so I am particularly grateful to noble Lords taking part. I also welcome the three noble Lords making their maiden speeches. I know that we are very much looking forward to what they have to say now and in many future contributions in your Lordships House.

The health and care system is under great strain as needs grow, particularly from older people with long-term conditions, and as costs rise. This mirrors the position elsewhere, not only in Europe and America but in many fast-developing countries. Not surprisingly, and not just in the UK, there is widespread concern and considerable confusion about the future for health. This uncertainty and insecurity means that it is more important than ever to understand the complex nature of health problems and what can be done about them, and to set out a long-term vision and strategy for the future.

Health and well-being are affected by three big things: the availability and quality of health and care services; individual lifestyles and behaviours—individual responsibility for our own health is absolutely vital; and all the physical, economic and social factors such as education, employment, wealth, social structures and the physical environment. Those are the many determinants of health, and co-ordinated action is need across all three areas. However, my focus today is on the third of these—the wider determinants of health, which go way beyond the reach of the NHS and individuals.

There is a great World Health Organization quotation: "Modern societies actively market unhealthy life styles".

I want to talk about how we can set that on its head. What would it be like, instead, to build a health-creating society where everyone—citizens, families, communities and businesses alike—had a role to play? None of

what I have said, however, should detract from the importance of the first two—the health and care system, and the choices and actions of individuals—and I am sure other noble Lords will address those.

Let me just give a few examples of what I am talking about. Barely half of our children achieve a good level of development by the time they start school, which affects their future physical and mental health and, of course, their ability to learn. Going to the other end of the age range, social isolation and loneliness in old age have the equivalent health impact of smoking 15 cigarettes a day and a slow recovery from illness. There is recent evidence that they also lead to earlier death. Having a social network and some meaning in life is hugely beneficial. Some groups in the population are affected more than others, including people with mental health problems. Men with severe mental health problems die up to 20 years earlier, and women 15 years earlier, than people without such problems. Importantly, there are also lower levels of subjective well-being and a higher burden of ill health in people from black and minority ethnic communities. Moreover, as Sir Michael Marmot has demonstrated, inequality damages health, with the most disadvantaged being most prone to ill health and living shorter lives.

Perhaps the most alarming statistic of all is that, on average, UK citizens have about seven years of ill health before we die; at the top of the scale, the Norwegians have only two years. What if we could reduce the UK figure by even one year? What a difference that would make for individuals and, at the same time, for the health and care system and therefore the economy. What is so different about Norway? This surely gives us a target to aim at.

These are complex problems, and they illustrate clearly that health cannot simply be left to individuals, the NHS, professionals or government. Everyone in every sector has a role to play. Moreover, improvements in health go hand in hand with improvements elsewhere. Education, the environment and the economy: all will benefit from a health-creating society. Better health and greater prosperity go together.

This is also very relevant to the future sustainability of the NHS, which is often discussed, like so much in health, in largely economic terms, as if it were really an economic problem and there could be purely economic solutions concerned with financing and/or restricting services and treatments. However, experience from the Netherlands to the USA shows that those solutions produce at best limited gains and may increase the economic cost to society as well as individuals. The long-term sustainability of the health and care system will come from changes in practice, finding health solutions to health problems and moving upstream into prevention, health promotion and, as I suggest here, building a health-creating society. Arguably, the NHS will not be sustainable without this.

Those are the problems, but an enormous amount is already being done. We can look at what is going on in the community and voluntary sector, and I am sure we will hear a great deal about that from other noble Lords. We know, for example, that informal carers

contribute services worth an estimated £119 billion a year at least. If the informal care sector fails, the burden falls on the formal sector. People do not want to be dependent and are keen to live independent lives.

Connecting Communities brings together many of the organisations that work on small, local health projects. There is a wonderful African saying: health is made at home, hospitals are for repairs. It matches the scientific evidence about creating the right environment in every sense. It is also for us a reminder of the work in the UK of the Early Intervention Foundation.

Let me turn to other sectors: to designers, architects and planners, who can design buildings which encourage walking and the use of stairs, communities where people meet each other and public buildings which bring together different services. I declare an interest as a member of the council of Reading University, and note as an example the work going on there on the built environment. Researchers are looking at topics as diverse as indoor air quality in schools and workplaces and its effect on health and the well-being and educational performance of children and workers, and the relationship between the design of homes and health and well-being.

Moving on to businesses, as well as developing healthy products, they can create healthy environments for their workforce, recognising how much time and productivity is lost every year through ill health. They can both promote health and tackle specific problems, as the firms working together in the City Mental Health Alliance are doing. It is good to see the work of Dame Carol Black as a government adviser raising standards in this area. Schools, colleges and universities can promote health literacy and competencies, integrate healthy activities into daily life and share facilities with health and other services.

I very much hope that my noble friend Lord Mawson will talk about the St Paul's Way Transformation Project in the East End of London. It is perhaps the most complete example of all these things that I have ever come across. It is about the community coming together with the private sector, education, health and care services: joining up the dots, as I suspect he may say, and informed by an entrepreneurial spirit. It is very much a model for the future.

Of course, government has many roles here. I recognise the importance of the economy and that the aspiration for a higher skilled and higher paid workforce is fundamental to health and well-being. Government is also able to address regulation and legislation, be it on salt, sugar, alcohol or elsewhere. Government can run great public education campaigns, but it also needs to do more to support civil society. I question whether it is doing enough now to build the sort of enabling environment we want, with all the social and community activities I mentioned earlier. It can also support disabled people to live independent lives. I am sure that my noble friend Lady Campbell will have something to say on this, both in this debate and elsewhere.

So there is already an enormous amount going on. Let me note the work of NHS England, Public Health England and other such bodies, local government—I welcome the devolution of responsibilities in Manchester and elsewhere—voluntary bodies, professional associations, researchers and many more than I have listed here. My purpose in this debate is to

point to all this and ask how much more we could achieve if we did it in an even more co-ordinated way. I am sure the Minister has a briefing folder bulging with excellent examples of policies, initiatives and activities, and I look forward to hearing about them. There are many out there. However, the Government could do much more in a joined-up way across government, bringing in all those bodies and sectors of society that shape the health of the population. In truth, only Government can really mobilise everyone who needs to be involved.

As the Minister knows, I wrote to the Prime Minister immediately after the election to propose that he and the Government take a big, bold initiative to mobilise all sectors around building a health-creating society. I received a broadly warm reply and understand that the time needs to be right for such an initiative. Now, with winter coming and industrial action planned, is certainly not it, but the time will come for a bold and imaginative commitment to engage all sectors in building a health-creating society. Does the Minister accept this analysis? Will the Government, at the right time, reach out and mobilise all those other sectors to help build a health-creating society—and not, as it so often appears in the newspapers, leave it all to the NHS, government and individuals?

There is also a challenge here for all political parties. I meet a lot of people working in the health and care system and I observe two things. One is frustration, depression and sometimes even despair about the future. However, when I listen to them I also hear a common vision of what that future might be like. In summary, and in very simplified form, this vision is of a transition from the current hospital-led, professional-dominated and fragmented system where things are done to and for patients, to a much more seamless people and community-based one where patients and communities play their roles alongside professionals. This is a vision of high-quality services, delivered in homes as well as local facilities, with a different infrastructure and far greater use of technology. My noble friend Lady Lane-Fox has talked about that, and I suspect she will do so again. With these changes comes the potential for both higher quality and lower costs.

This vision will require major change. I have no doubt that it will require the closure of some hospitals and changing roles for staff. This will be difficult, both practically and politically, and will need political support. The challenge to the political parties seems to be that we need a shared vision for the future and some cross-party political will to make this happen. There will be plenty of political differences about the means of getting there but it seems that this end, this sort of vision, is common ground.

We already have some elements of such a vision in current policy: the *Five Year Forward View* is very good and has a lot of support, but is ultimately a technocratic and managerial document—I know because I have written such documents in the past. There is a need for a broad-based, cross-party coalition of agreement about what the future looks like. I do not know how that should be achieved, whether through some appointed commission or otherwise. What I do know is that people in the NHS and the country more widely would benefit from clarity of vision and strategy.

[LORD CRISP]

Your Lordships' House also has a role here. It has very often led the way in discussing new and coming ideas and influencing the future. I think of debates I have heard here, for example, on genetics and, most recently, on securing parity between mental and physical health. Noble Lords from all sides of this House argued that case cogently and ultimately very successfully. I hope we might be able to do the same sort of thing here. I note that we are presently asked if we want to put forward proposals for ad hoc committees. I wonder if we should put forward one on building a health-creating society, so that these important ideas can be deliberated on in much more detail than the five minutes noble Lords have today allows. I would be interested to know if noble Lords thought that a good idea and would like to join me in making such a proposal.

Let me finish in optimistic and mildly jingoistic style. The UK is a great world leader in health. We have astonishing strengths in academia, the NHS, the role of DfID globally, the voluntary sector and our commercial organisations. The UK was a pioneer in providing a National Health Service that covered everyone in the population. It would be wonderful if we could lead the way again in moving beyond the professionally dominated and rather industrialised system of service to build a health-creating society served by a modern, fit for purpose health and care system. That would benefit us all as individuals, and bring with it wide-ranging benefits to the country in both prosperity and health. I beg to move.

4.40 pm

Baroness Jay of Paddington (Lab): My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, for introducing this debate in such an informative and authoritative way. It is obviously a very important issue. I wholeheartedly agree with the terms of the noble Lord's Motion and support his points about the way in which the determinants of health in today's society are often driven by matters such as alcoholism, obesity and other concerns, which are obviously not the sole responsibility of the NHS, however much we support it.

I think that the way that the noble Lord has proposed is the only way to improve the stark health inequalities in this country. As he reminded us, we are all familiar with the really disgraceful record of discrepancies in morbidity and mortality between different social and economic groups in this country. It has become almost a truism of health economics that low income and low social status are major contributors to ill health, and probably the determining factor in more rapid ageing.

The proposal of the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, for working towards a "health-creating society"—I am still finding it a little difficult to put those three words together—must be the right approach, but my concern this afternoon is: if the ideas and the vision he describes gain general support, how are they to be delivered? How will we make it happen? As noble Lords are aware, there is enormous emphasis nowadays on localism and finding solutions and organising action as near as possible to the communities involved. I worry that there are difficulties in relying primarily on the local approach to tackle some of the somewhat intractable problems of public health.

Of course, community-based alliances of public service, private enterprise and the voluntary sector can often unleash especially effective energy, and there have been some interesting and radical ideas put forward recently on this ground. I was intrigued, for example, by an article by the chief executive of the Royal Society for Public Health, who wrote about the local high street as "an untapped resource" for promoting health. She picked up on the WHO statement that modern society is actively marketing very unhealthy lifestyles, which the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, has already referred to, and argued that stricter local planning laws and differential business rates could drive businesses such as fast-food outlets, betting shops and payday loan shops out of the high street and reduce the tempting opportunities for unhealthy lifestyle choices. I can see the attraction of this proposal, but in the broader picture I fear that the huge reductions in the budgets of local authorities, combined with a lack of local expertise in specialist problems such as sexual health, may make local projects inadequate and sometimes even increase inequalities.

I hope I will not be labelled a centralist dinosaur for saying that national government and a senior Minister must take the lead responsibility for promoting change in this area and achieving the necessary collaboration to build a health-creating society. I was proud to be a Health Minister when the very first Minister for Public Health, my noble friend Lady Jowell, was appointed to that post. She was a senior Minister of State with a wide remit and, although the post has continued in successive Governments, it has not always had the authority of the original appointment and, very importantly from my point of view, it has always been based in the Department of Health. In my view, a Cabinet post should be created—we will have to think of a good title—to take forward the cross-cutting policies we are discussing. This Minister should be based in the Cabinet Office, with co-ordinating powers across government.

My enthusiasm for this approach is partly based on my experience as Minister for Women, when I was based in the Cabinet Office and worked with several departments across Whitehall and with outside agencies. It was a largely successful arrangement. My Cabinet Office team acted as a kind of internal pressure group within the Government; we legitimately raised issues of women's employment, education, health and pensions across Whitehall and had the authority to do so. I think that the interesting and imaginative proposals for a health-creating society can only be delivered by an imaginative approach from the machinery of government, and I would like to see a Cabinet Minister leading the initiative towards this vision.

4.45 pm

Baroness Williams of Crosby (LD): My Lords, I, too, congratulate to the noble Lord, Lord Crisp. He has the holistic and internationalist approach that health worldwide requires. We know that he has drawn the attention of the whole world to the impact of influential and dangerous diseases, such as Ebola and other national and international illnesses, crossing borders. I wholly agree with him that what this country needs most is an all-party approach to our National

Health Service that recognises the remarkable things it has achieved and that, instead of quarrelling among ourselves, we should take strength from it and extend its influence and understanding more widely than at present.

In my four minutes, I shall whizz through a number of things that we ought to be able to do. One thing they show up is that many departments, not simply the Department of Health, have a responsibility. It is very important to notice that, in the last spending review, we sadly saw serious cuts to local government—for example, 6.2% of public health expenditure by local government, which amounts to a loss of £200 million—so what the noble Baroness, Lady Jay, said is very relevant. That will be saved, thank God, by central government giving additional resources to the National Health Service: the £8 billion or so that was announced only yesterday, to my great pleasure. It still means that the local connection and local responsibility have been fundamentally weakened, and that is not in the long-term interest of this country's prospective health-creating society.

I shall stop for a moment on the position of central government, to which the noble Baroness, Lady Jay, referred. We could save between £10 billion and £12 billion a year by effectively addressing the illnesses that are very closely related to excessive sugar in our diet. I shall not make a direct connection to type 2 diabetes, but there is enough medical evidence to show that there is a very close relationship. Bearing out what the noble Baroness, Lady Jay, said, the House will know that in the poorest parts of the country and among the poorest people in those parts of the country, consumption of sugar, fizzy drinks and other sugar-related foods is very much higher than in Kensington and Chelsea. That means we are pushing some of the poorest members of our society into eating cheap unhealthy foods, which lands the National Health Service with the responsibility for dealing with the consequences. Last year, those consequences were estimated to be of the order of £14 billion. It is interesting that the amount of extra money given to the health service is £8 billion, which shows very forcefully the case made by the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, about what happens if you do not address prevention soon enough and land the whole price on cure, which is exactly the wrong way to go.

My second point relates to the Department for Education, which we have not discussed very much. There has been a considerable fall in the amount of time given in state-maintained schools to PE and games. The figure has dropped from around 127 hours a month to fewer than 100 hours. There has been a sharp decline in the amount of time spent on PE and, in a situation where so many children inevitably spend their time watching television, the effects of that drop are very serious.

As my time is running out, I shall conclude very quickly with one reference to mental health, to which the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, referred. There are three things about it. The first is the terrifying increase in domestic violence casualties—not of overall crime, which has fallen—both women and men, but primarily women.

The second is the impact of social networks, particularly in legalising, as it were, serious bullying in education and of young people and adults alike, which we have to address. I suggest to the House—my last thought but one—that we should begin to look at the possibility of insisting that social networks hold a contact name and address of those who use them, not to censor people but just so that they know that somebody knows they are the person responsible for trolling in a way that makes the lives of many of our fellow citizens highly disagreeable, and which is sometimes cruel and brutal.

Finally on mental health, I agree completely with what the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, said about the equality of treatment working both ways, but we must also address very closely, therefore, the effects of loneliness—of families and societies that are breaking down—on the mental health, particularly of many older people.

4.50 pm

Baroness Campbell of Surbiton (CB): My Lords, I thank my noble friend Lord Crisp for tabling this very timely debate. Over the years, my noble friend and I have often exchanged ideas on what I like to refer to as the empowerment model of health and social care well-being. That was the model that drove my leadership of the charities the National Centre for Independent Living and, after that, the Social Care Institute for Excellence, where I was privileged to be founding chair from 2001 to 2006.

Michael Marmot, in his book *The Health Gap*, argues that not health services but the social determinants of health are more important in determining the health of the population. Like Marmot, I believe it is more important to change the conditions in which people live—to empower people holistically—than simply to address their medical condition or their care need, which disabled people have described to me as the medical model.

It is more important to empower people in health and social care than simply to address their immediate medical conditions. Therefore, the National Centre for Independent Living used the empowerment model to support disabled people to move from dependency-creating care provision to independent living support. Our work was born out of the Community Care (Direct Payments) Act, legislation that was conceived and largely implemented by disabled people. For the first time in our lives we had direct control over our social care budgets. I have to say that traditional care providers were very opposed at the time but, with the assistance of enlightened directors of social services, civil servants and a very enlightened politician, the tectonic plates of power shifted from “the professional knows best” to “the client knows better”.

This care revolution could not have been achieved without the national infrastructure of local centres for independent living. These local centres are largely run and controlled by disabled people, who provide advocacy, advice, buddying, volunteering and jobs. Over 15 years, I saw people society had written off come out of residential care, long-stay hospital wards or their parents' homes and begin to live as rounded human beings. Relationships were formed, families were made and children born.

[BARONESS CAMPBELL OF SURBITON]

Things have rightly progressed over the years, and now people with learning disabilities also enjoy the same right to choice and control over the way their support is delivered and experienced. So, too, do people with enduring mental health challenges, who developed their own empowerment model, the recovery model, which demands greater focus on life chances rather than more psychiatrists, more treatment and more loneliness, pushing a culture shift in the provision of mental health services.

There is rich evidence that the independent living movement drove a culture shift that has led to a wider personalisation approach and now, at last, it is beginning to catch on with personal health budgets. But I remind noble Lords that this was conceived by the people who have the condition and not the experts.

It really baffles me why, when the economy shrank, local and national politicians decided to cut first the independent living infrastructure that is necessary for progressive personalisation. I remember campaigning for a national independent living scheme, which became the Independent Living Fund, over 21 years ago. It was the epitome of the independent living empowerment approach, yet again it was sadly cast aside without a government strategy to ensure its principle and outcomes were not lost when transferred to local authorities.

Independent living pays for itself again and again. It is well evidenced that people who live independently in the community with the right support lead healthier and more cost-effective lives. It is the very basis of health and well-being creation, where professionals enable, facilitate and inform, and the service user learns, takes control and lives—not just survives.

Finally, I congratulate the Government on the Chancellor's spending review statement yesterday, allowing as it does local authorities to levy a new social care precept of up to 2% on council tax. This is good news. But a word of caution: let the £2 billion investment be directed at social care that enables the service user to become an active, empowered citizen.

Winston Churchill said of scientists that they need to be,

“on tap, not on top”.

We need their expertise, but for God's sake, do not let them run the country. I would argue that the same applies to health and social care professionals: we need their expertise, but for God's sake, do not let them run people's lives. I suggest that legislators, policymakers, economists and politicians should seriously reach out to disabled people and the service users and let them be part of the solution, not a problem to be dealt with. Perhaps we could give leadership to my noble friend's health-creating society and not simply be the users of it.

4.57 pm

Baroness Redfern (Con) (Maiden Speech): My Lords, it is with a great source of pride, having spent more than 28 years in continuous service to the Isle of Axholme as an elected councillor and now leader, to be able to stand among you today as a Member of your Lordships' House.

Preparing for today—I am sure many noble Lords are acquainted with this—I realised my predicament in speaking before so many learned and talented individuals from all sides of the House. Now that I am a Member of your Lordships' House, I should like to say what a delight it is to observe the wealth of knowledge that this House provides, and the great kindness and warmth shown to me not only by noble Lords but by all the staff who I have encountered since I took my seat here. I would also like to register my eternal thanks to my family and long-standing colleagues. I also thank my two sponsors, my noble friends Lord Taylor of Holbeach and Lady Eaton, both of whom have aided me and provided helpful guidance in my initial few weeks here.

I will, if I may, briefly take this opportunity to share with noble Lords the historic origins of the Isle of Axholme and how the isle came into being. I moved to the isle following marriage and we started our businesses here, enabling us to integrate into what continues to be a close-knit and very friendly community.

The isle is dominated by marshland and peat, with many of the original communities, including Crowle, Epworth and Haxey, all built on what was previously the only high and dry land available. Indeed, the isle is known to many by the early influences of the Dutchman, Cornelius Vermuyden, an engineer whose work at Windsor brought him to the notice of Charles I. The King subsequently commissioned him in 1626 to drain Hatfield Chase.

The isle is known as an isle as it was previously separated by four rivers—the Idle, Don, Trent and Torn—which created a unique and strong identity. A number of notable individuals hail from the isle, and Epworth is the birthplace of Wesleyan Methodism. We have a strong appreciation of agricultural activity and the beautiful watercourses that the isle has to offer, which have produced, among other things, high-quality beetroot and celery. That said, the isle and our area more widely are very susceptible to flooding, and securing funding for proper flood defences is something that I have already championed and will continue to pursue.

It might seem appropriate to speak on health, considering my heart rate in delivering this maiden speech, and I welcome the debate secured by the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, today. Across North Lincolnshire, we have worked hard to engage all of the community and provide opportunities to improve health prospects—both physically and mentally. North Lincolnshire Council has invested in a successful programme of community well-being hubs, which provide advice and support for a wide range of individuals and groups, including vulnerable adults. This is against a backdrop of declining local government budgets and I am proud that we have achieved this by making necessary savings elsewhere to secure and improve front-line services.

The hubs work with and support older people, young adults and also carers; recognising the wide mix of people involved in healthcare. They work neatly with the national health agenda by integrating services for the benefit of both patients and the broader health economy. Indeed, the regulation of health and social care professionals not only impacts on the lives of

registered and aspiring professionals but affects the lives of all those who use these services. The community hubs also provide a base for well-being checks which, among other aims, address poor nutrition and raise awareness of healthy eating and choice. Poor nutrition, which manifests itself very much in older people, is estimated to cost the NHS £13 billion a year. Looking at ways of addressing this and creating health aspirations locally is something that I am passionate about.

The latest addition to our commitment to develop health opportunities in North Lincolnshire is the Sir John Mason House intermediate care facility in Winterton, the town where I was born, and this brand-new facility was launched this year. Those using this service may stay there for a period of rehabilitation and reablement, for example following a hospital stay. With an ever-increasing older population, loneliness and isolation are key challenges for all local authorities, and North Lincolnshire Council is working hard to combat this. Like many areas, memory cafes are held across North Lincolnshire and help link residents with health services. These are shining examples of co-operation between the community and different agencies. However, we must look at ways to further integrate services and at the wider health debate as social isolation is known to increase the chances of premature death by up to a third.

Finally, the Isle of Axholme is blessed with some outstanding scenery and is a very special place. I am passionate about encouraging and assisting local residents to access this shared space with opportunities such as Walking the Way to Health, which is a project to organise walking activities. While my walking days are nowhere near behind me, I look forward to spending plenty of time sitting in on the many future debates regarding health and sharing the positive achievements across North Lincolnshire, and particularly on the isle, with this House.

5.03 pm

Lord Best (CB): My Lords, I am delighted to follow the maiden speech of the noble Baroness, Lady Redfern. She comes to us as a distinguished council leader whose insights, not least from North Lincolnshire, will add an important localist dimension to our deliberations, as she has so impressively shown today. Greg Clark, the Secretary of State, said last year that she was, “one of the Conservative Party’s most effective politicians”.

Wearing my hat as a past president of the Local Government Association, I am particularly pleased to see the voice of local government strengthened by her presence here. We all look forward to her future contributions in your Lordships’ House.

I, too, am grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, for initiating and organising this debate, and for his insightful and excellent opening speech. I want to fasten on to the first words in the title of our debate—“building a health-creating society”—and to make a connection between the buildings we inhabit and the health we enjoy.

Housing and health have long been intertwined. For the first half of the last century the Minister for Health doubled as the Housing Minister, so close were the two issues. In the ageing society of the 21st century

that linkage needs revitalising and reinforcing. Unsuitable accommodation carries with it a series of dangers to our health and well-being. Overcrowding and poor conditions can create endless ailments and mental health problems. All families have a fundamental need for a decent home in which children have the space and security to develop.

Speaking as chair of the HAPPI group—Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation—and as co-chair of the Housing and Care for Older People APPG, I want to concentrate on the housing and health equation as it affects older people. So many older people spend virtually every hour of every day inside their home. It can be a trap, a virtual prison, if mobility problems mean that steps and stairs become an insuperable barrier, or if your spouse or your carer must carry you upstairs for a bath. If your central heating has not worked for years because you cannot afford to replace the old system and if the two steps at the front door get icy in bad weather, sooner or later your home will let you down—or indeed, may be the death of you.

As research by Professor Sir Michael Marmot has shown so clearly, cold conditions in this country’s homes lead to respiratory and circulatory diseases and premature winter deaths, contrasting with the outcomes from the far better-insulated homes in Scandinavia where mortality rates do not vary with the seasons. Trips and falls in the home account for a high proportion of hospital admissions by older people. It is the unsuitability of the home that prevents so many older people being discharged from hospital, or causes them to be readmitted after they have left. You may want to go home and the hospital certainly wants the bed you occupy, but if your accommodation is totally unsuitable, you must stay in hospital and the NHS is left with an escalating bill for a service you do not want.

Conversely, decent, well-designed housing enhances our enjoyment of life and our ability to live independently and well for longer. If our homes are well insulated, warm and efficient, as well as being well ventilated; if they are light and bright, with sufficient space; if they are lifetime homes—fully accessible, even when we may need a wheelchair—we are unlikely to require hugely costly residential care, and our later years can continue to be fulfilling. I welcome the spending review measures to raise funds for social care, but the biggest savings can come from preventing the need for residential and other care.

Housing designed specifically for older people can also combat that scourge of later life referred to by the noble Baroness, Lady Redfern—loneliness from isolation and a lack of social contacts. Retirement villages, age-exclusive apartments, extra care and assisted living—today’s version by housing associations of the sheltered housing of yesteryear—are all housing solutions that can provide companionable, engaging communities for people with similar ages and interests.

In my five minutes I cannot spell out the range of steps that could be taken by central government in joining up housing with health and care, supporting the creation of new accommodation and funding grants for disabled facilities and home improvement; or by local government in planning policies on integrating

[LORD BEST]

housing, care and health, with joint assessment and commissioning, not just in new combined authorities with devolved powers but through health and well-being boards everywhere; or even by each of us past retirement age who should not just wait for a crisis before considering downsizing to sustain our own independence, free up our family homes for the next generation and save the resources of the NHS, social care budgets and our own funds. I must satisfy myself with simply making the plea that all those interested in the health of the nation should never forget the immense significance of housing.

5.09 pm

Baroness Masham of Ilton (CB): My Lords, I thank my noble friend Lord Crisp for securing this debate, which comes at a time when the NHS is under serious stress. The demands on it are immense, but, as my noble friend suggests, if everybody pulled together a healthy and resilient population may be achieved.

It is of great concern that the funds for public health are being cut back, because grants to voluntary organisations can help people who need support in so many different ways. It will be at our peril if sexually transmitted diseases and their clinics are neglected. In West Yorkshire some strains of gonorrhoea have become resistant to their treatment drugs. In London there are some excellent HIV/AIDS treatment units, but HIV infection is still increasing. Drug-resistant strains of tuberculosis are also increasing. It would be very unwise to become complacent.

Public Health England should educate the public about the dangers of a wide variety of infections. Hepatitis C can now be cured, but few patients are getting the drugs they need. The problems of alcohol abuse, alcoholism and drug abuse must be addressed. Treatment centres should not be put at risk. I ask the Minister: how will cuts to public health budgets affect drug and alcohol clinics? If Public Health England cannot afford to tackle these problems with NHS England and NGOs, perhaps the drinks industry and the private sector can help. Working together must be the answer.

Simon Stevens, head of NHS England, said that hospitals should be health-promoting environments. Hospital food is integral to the health and resilience of patients, hospital visitors and NHS staff. I experienced hospital food that was tasteless and unpalatable. Much of it was wasted. It came from Wales and was reheated. People in spinal units, who have serious injuries and have to be in for long periods, sometimes being treated for pressure sores, need good diet and nutrition, which is key to building health resilience in patients. Also, hospitals are where people are at their most vulnerable. Many of them may be elderly and have eating problems. They need good nutrition to heal, gain a healthy weight and recover from their illness. Good food builds good morale. Indeed, patients getting depressed can look forward to meals and going home early.

There is currently a TV programme called “Doctor in the House” on BBC1. Last week a doctor visited a family in their home, and there was a diabetic man who was eating all the wrong food. The family was shown what a good, healthy diet and plenty of exercise

could do to bring high sugar levels down. The woman was shown how to beat anxiety and the daughter how to prevent infections by washing her hands. Many people need to be helped to live healthy lives and to feel good. I am sure that these sorts of programmes will help.

The paraplegic sports movement was started by an inspired Jewish doctor at Stoke Mandeville Hospital rehabilitating wounded military personnel from the Second World War. It was found that if you could compete in sport you could compete in normal life and work, however disabled. These sports became the Paralympics. Many disabled people worldwide live healthy and resilient lives, having been stimulated through sport. I salute His Royal Highness Prince Harry for the Invictus Games, which show the amazing feats accomplished by modern injured military personnel, who achieve so much.

I congratulate the three maiden speakers, and I am pleased they have chosen health as their subject for debate.

5.15 pm

Lord Foster of Bath (LD) (Maiden Speech): My Lords, I, too, congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Crisp. I am grateful for this opportunity to make my maiden speech and, of course, for the privilege of joining your Lordships’ House. I hope I will be able to make a useful contribution.

I am also grateful for the generous welcome I have received from all sides of the House, and for the patient support and help from noble Lords—not least my noble friend Lady Walmsley—and from the attendants, doorkeepers, catering staff and all the excellent and courteous parliamentary staff as I struggle to find my feet and my way round this end of the building. I am especially grateful for the advice, “If lost, look for the blue carpet”.

I rise with a sense of trepidation similar to that which I felt when, 23 years ago, I rose to make my maiden speech in the other place, and, in 2010, when I seconded the Loyal Address following the formation of the coalition Government. That was a particularly difficult speech for a then 63 year-old to make, since the tradition is that that role is usually given to a “young, rising star”. I felt trepidation also when, as a junior Minister, I stood at the Dispatch Box to answer questions for the first time: a noisy and acrimonious event, full of the yah-boo which plagues the other place. They could learn a great deal from the courtesy and civility of your Lordships’ House.

Trepidation or not, it is a great honour to be here among many distinguished Peers, just as it was a great honour to serve the people of Bath as their MP for 23 years. As noble Lords will know, Bath is a beautiful World Heritage city with two universities, a Premiership Rugby club, vibrant businesses, excellent festivals and wonderful people. It is my mark of gratitude to those people, who allowed me the privilege of being their representative for so many years, that I chose Bath—or “Barrth” as they prefer to call it—for my title.

My trepidation is also enhanced by following contributions from such eloquent and expert speakers. The noble Lord, Lord Crisp, who introduced the debate, is a case in point. Few could know more about

health, in this country and globally, than him. I was especially struck by his view that all sectors should contribute to creating a healthy and resilient population.

Of course, we should all take greater personal responsibility for our own health. More needs to be done to encourage people to look after themselves. To take the example of obesity and the often-accompanying type 2 diabetes, it could often be reduced by greater personal discipline, but many organisations also have a role to play. Preparations for the hugely successful 2012 Olympics and Paralympics emphasised seeking the legacy of a healthier nation. Much was done, from encouraging businesses to help employees get fit to assisting clubs in boosting grass-roots sports participation. In this latter regard, I hope we will continue to protect sports playing fields and address the lamentable state of PE in our primary schools.

Our engineers and designers can play a role. I am the president of a Bath-based charity called Designability, which brings such experts together to create devices that improve well-being. Their “Day Clock”, for example, helps people with dementia maintain their routine. The clock constantly displays the day of the week and whether it is morning, afternoon, evening or night. This can reduce anxiety, increase independence and make life easier for those suffering from dementia. Their Wizzybug—a fun-looking powered wheelchair for children under 5—addresses the needs of children with conditions such as cerebral palsy and muscular dystrophy. It gives them mobility and independence.

I echo the views of my noble friend Lady Williams. As she rightly says, many government departments have a role to play—some more obviously than others—in creating a healthy nation. Like education and the housing and planning elements of DCLG, the health department’s role is obvious. I welcome its increased emphasis on prevention and mental health.

I am delighted that important steps spearheaded by my right honourable friend Norman Lamb have been taken towards ending NHS bias in favour of physical health conditions. The introduction of NHS waiting time standards for people with common mental health conditions such as depression has started this process. I welcome the additional £600 million for mental health announced yesterday. However, the potential contribution of other departments is often less understood. Take, for example, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, which is a much undervalued department, yet its work in the arts and sport can make an enormous contribution to the health of the nation.

Mental health campaigner Rachel Kelly says that poetry kick-started her own recovery from mental health problems. She calls for the bonds between well-being and the arts to be strengthened. I entirely agree. No wonder the Department for Work and Pensions, back in 2009, acknowledged:

“There is increasing recognition that having a sense of purpose through leisure and cultural activities contributes to older people’s well-being”.

Creating a healthy and resilient population does indeed require contributions from all sectors. If government is to maximise its contribution, we need to recognise that many government departments, not just the most obvious ones, can play a role, ideally as

part of a cross-government strategy. However, none of this diminishes the need for us all to take greater responsibility for our own health.

5.21 pm

Lord Alton of Liverpool (CB): My Lords, it is a particular pleasure to congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Foster of Bath, on his exemplary and cogent speech, not least because, having served together in another place, we share many common interests and experiences, not least that we were part of that exclusive group of former Chief Whips.

The noble Lord was born in Lancashire, in Preston, worked as a science teacher in Kent, and was an elected member of Avon County Council, on which he became his group’s leader. Elected to the House of Commons in 1992, he was fortunate enough to represent the beautiful world heritage city of Bath until standing down earlier this year. A diligent, respected and hard-working Member of the House of Commons, at various times the noble Lord served as his party’s spokesman on education, environment, work and pensions, transport, and culture, media and sport. Like many members of the noble Lord’s party, responsibilities came thick and fast for him. As we heard, in the coalition Government he served as a Minister in the Department for Communities and Local Government. Today, the whole House will want to welcome him. Judging by the quality of his excellent maiden speech, we have a rising star in the making again. We have good reason to look forward to hearing the noble Lord on many occasions in the future.

It was a Liverpool physician, Dr Benjamin Moore, who, in 1910, in *The Dawn of the Health Age*, is credited as probably the first to use the words “National Health Service”. When it was founded in 1948, Aneurin Bevan declared that it would,

“last as long as there are folk left with the faith to fight for it”.

Bevan saw the NHS as a bulwark against fear. Although we all still have the faith to fight for it, the world in which it functions is fundamentally different, with dramatically changed demographics of population and disease. The backdrop against which today’s debate is being held is a sobering one, from overspending to strikes and demoralised health workers. A consultant recently told me, “Currently, more and more is being asked of us, but we are being given less and less resources to achieve it. There is increasing exhaustion as every bit of spare capacity in every respect is stretched”. That is leading to demoralisation and disaffection. A health-creating society must value its health workers.

It may be a National Health Service but there are endless disparities and inequalities within its system, and modern England is simply too diverse for a model that insists one size should fit all. This is true of our attitude to lifestyle as well as to care itself. For example, smoking rates during pregnancy range from 2% in west London to 28% in Blackpool. Malnutrition has reappeared in some places but not others, with 193 episodes of malnutrition at Salford over a 12-month period, while even the day on which you are admitted to a hospital can affect your chances of survival, with Imperial College publishing research that babies born at weekends in hospitals in England have a greater

[LORD ALTON OF LIVERPOOL]

chance of dying than those born on weekdays. End-of-life care and hospice provision are brilliant in some parts of the country and patchy at best in others. The noble Baroness, Lady Williams, reminded us of our equally patchy approach to mental health, a point that was also touched on by the noble Lord, Lord Foster of Bath, in his maiden speech.

A few weeks ago the Minister gave me a Written Answer about prescriptions for antidepressants and confirmed that since 1991 more than 660 million antidepressants—at a cost of nearly £6 billion—have been prescribed by the NHS, with year-on-year figures increasing exponentially. If the overuse of antibiotics is creating cause for concern—and it is—should we not also be exercised by the overuse of antidepressants and our failure to address toxic loneliness and isolation? For instance, it is said that around 1 million elderly people do not see a friend or a neighbour during an average week. This has an inevitable detrimental effect on health. Like operations for obesity, this is another disturbing example of putting a poultice on a problem rather than attacking the root causes.

In the search for a healthy society, my bottom line would be that healthy relationships create a healthy society. It is especially important for the vulnerable to know that they are valued, as the noble Baroness, Lady Campbell, reminded us earlier. It is no good if our attitude or treatment say otherwise. With around 700,000 people in Britain with degenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and predictions that there will be 1 million dementia sufferers by 2026, we cannot value this by cost alone. It has to be how we see people themselves.

If we started from a different place, putting much greater emphasis on our responsibilities to society and to one another, rather than slogans about choice and autonomy, we would create a much healthier, happier and more resilient society. We can smoke, drink, neglect our health or use lethal injections to get rid of the unwanted because we assume that medicine will fix everything and take care of us. But that is simply not so, which is why my noble friend was so right to initiate today's debate.

5.27 pm

The Lord Bishop of Bristol: My Lords, I, too, am grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, for introducing this debate and this very big idea into the Chamber. Already we start to see that the breadth of material that needs to be thought about in relation to creating a healthy society is indeed vast. I sat here for some of the debate thinking were I the Minister—God forbid—how I might respond to such a plethora of concerns that have been articulated. I wish him well with that.

Of course, what we cannot do, as several noble Lords have noted, is expect the Government to solve this on their own, although I think there is a major challenge involved in this for government. That is what I would call the alignment of policy—how do you align policy over a very wide range of areas in life in such a way that human well-being emerges from it?

Your Lordships are very well aware that the danger of these debates is vain repetition. I have no wish to enter into that. In the few minutes available to me, I will focus on a particular aspect of our society at the moment, which causes great concern and, as we have already heard, has some rather serious health outcomes. I speak of social isolation—loneliness. On the Mind website, loneliness is defined as,

“not feeling part of the world”.

It goes on to explain that it is therefore perfectly conceivable—I sense that I might have experienced this in my own life—to be part of a crowd and yet feel extremely lonely. It goes on to talk about the impact of loneliness on an area of health that several noble Lords have mentioned—mental health.

However, as the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, reminded us with the rather horrendous statistic of the physical health outcomes of loneliness being tantamount to smoking 15 cigarettes a day, loneliness should indeed concern us. It is not just the preserve of the elderly in our society; loneliness exists among a number of groups, including housebound people, those in the dormitory suburbs we speak about, where neighbourliness seems in short supply, young mothers, bereaved people and those who feel discriminated against. Lots of people experience a sense of social isolation and loneliness. A GP in Bristol shocked me recently by saying that a good number of the people who attend her surgery come not because there is anything particularly wrong with them from a health point of view but because they simply want to be heard by somebody for a few minutes and that is their only chance. That is very disturbing, partly because I believe we are social beings. John Donne poetically wrote:

“No man is an island”.

I think we were designed to thrive in community: significant social contacts are very important for us.

It would be very easy for us to sink into a mire of depression around all this, but it is worth saying that there are many groups in society who contribute hugely to creating social networks, or at least the opportunity for social networks and for significant social contact. Here, I think of course of churches, faith groups, charities and clubs, and the many other community organisations that create an environment where people can meet each other and speak. I am also well aware—this is a point that the Government might like to think about—that increasingly some of the bureaucratic apparatus, some of it necessary, is interfering with our need to create a volunteer culture that would service these organisations and, in the end, lead to good health.

Back in 1942, the Beveridge report named the five giant evils that the welfare state was set up to tackle. They were want, disease, squalor, ignorance and idleness. I certainly would not want to describe loneliness as an evil but it is a growing fact of life in our society, and its destructive impact on human well-being needs further research and further understanding, as well as further imagination in seeking to combat it. How do we create communities of wholeness where people take responsibility? I realise that some of the questions asked this afternoon by me and others might fall into the realm of essay questions, but I look forward to hearing what my noble friend the Minister has to say.

5.32 pm

Baroness Lane-Fox of Soho (CB): My Lords, I, too, thank the noble Lord for securing this debate. I was reflecting on whether he is happy or sad that he no longer runs the great NHS, for it seems to me that in many ways there has been no greater time of excitement, with innovations and improvements. At the same time—my goodness me—we need them more than ever. Perhaps the greatest of those innovations and improvements is the internet. I would call it the organising principle of our age, yet there is by no means the same organisation around it in our health service.

You can perhaps keep on your phone in your pocket as much health information as your GP has about you—perhaps even more. When I describe the House of Lords to people outside it, I often put some of the longevity in this Chamber down to the fact that noble Lords walk around so much along the endless corridors. I would love to be able to give all noble Lords a Jawbone UP or other device to wear around their wrists to test my philosophy. I have—although I do not have it with me today—a bracelet that nudges me every now and then to help my nerves by moving and wriggling. There are endless devices, of which I am sure some noble Lords are aware, that help people to read practically every single vital life sign. This is an exciting time: it can only be a good thing to have more information, not less.

I have worked with two small UK companies. One, called Sleepio, is helping to address the enormous challenge of insomnia. It has an app—a device that it uses to help people talk about their health after having had a bad night's sleep, and to give tips about how to get a better one. There has been a more than 50% improvement in people's sleep, and a 100% improvement in respect of the number of sleep drugs people are taking. Another small company, HealthUnlocked, helps people to find patient groups with diseases like their own. One of its most important and useful groups is concerned with diabetes. The people using it say that they have experienced an improvement in quality of life with the disease of some 60%, and a 30% reduction in the number of drugs they use. These are profound and important shifts, all enabled by the internet.

However, I must wave two enormous red banners about the huge risks that I see coming over the horizon. The first is one that I mention not out of any parochialism or jingoism: we would be mistaken to think that it is not a very small area of a very small bit of the west coast of America that is likely to dominate the health creation of the future. Google, Facebook and the other big US platforms have designs on our health. Google, even in its failed attempt to build health records, took 30 million individuals' health records in a very short space of time. This is an enormous issue that we need to debate and think about much more carefully. The force for good is hugely powerful, but the possibility that our enormously valuable NHS will lose ground to these incredibly well-invested organisations, which understand technology at their very core, is real. If we are to have a truly health-creating society, deploying all the tools in our armoury, we must think very carefully about enabling the NHS to “compete”—in the right way—with some of these giants. For me, the

potential access to the data that our great NHS has, and the inclusivity and universality of those data, is one of our greatest weapons, but it would be a mistake to imagine that we are anywhere near that right now.

My second red flag concerns digital skills and inclusion. I declare an interest as chair of Go ON UK, a charity that I set up to build digital skills in the UK. There are 12 million adults in this country who cannot do basic things online, yet we know that the internet is one of the most powerful tools in combating the loneliness that I am delighted to say many people in this Chamber have already mentioned.

I end with a story from a woman I met in Birmingham, who told me that the internet has quite literally saved her life. Even I, prone to hyperbole, was sceptical, but she described how she was one of the 1.5 million people over 65 who see no one in a week. She had learnt how to use social media and had connected to family that she had not seen in many years. She told me that it had stopped her wanting to jump off the building where she lived. If that is not health creation, I do not know what is.

5.37 pm

Lord Smith of Hindhead (Con) (Maiden speech): My Lords, I have been advised by some noble Lords to make my maiden speech as soon as possible, and by others to wait a few months. I have been advised to wait until a subject comes up that I at least know something about, and by others not to worry about the subject and just to work my way through it. I wonder if I have become a victim of “Peer pressure”.

Since being introduced to your Lordships' House on 12 October, the support that I have received has been overwhelming, but comes as no surprise as the reputation of this House is well known. I was more surprised at how many noble Lords congratulated me on the Hindhead tunnel, which now allows motorists to avoid a well-known former traffic bottleneck at the Hindhead crossroads. Indeed, I suspect that people who were once held up for several hours on their travels would have agreed with William Cobbett, who wrote in 1822 in his book *Rural Rides* that Hindhead was,

“that miserable hill, the most villainous spot that God ever made”,

which he,

“disdainfully scorned to go over”.

It seems that my entire time so far in your Lordships' House has been one in which I am “not content”. Indeed, I am starting to wonder whether I shall ever be “content”, and a day will come when the occasion arises to divide and “go through the door by the right of the Throne”. There is no doubt, however, that all new Members of this House must be more than content with the friendly and helpful staff—from the ever-present and steadfast doorkeepers to those who work unseen in the many and far-flung corners of this House, who do all they can to assist every noble Lord, but particularly those of us who are new and who inevitably spend a little time wandering around and getting lost. As with most things in life, one needs to get lost before one can find the right way. The honour of being here is both extraordinary and humbling. I thank my supporters,

[LORD SMITH OF HINDHEAD]
my noble friends Lord Feldman of Elstree and Lord Strathclyde, for ensuring that I was not overly daunted on my introduction day.

Bearing in mind my background of working with Conservative clubs and being chairman of the Committee of Registered Clubs Association, an organisation that encompasses all 11 of the main club groups and comprises more than 4,000 clubs with an estimated 2 million members—here I must declare an interest—some may have been surprised that I chose to speak in this debate on building a health-creating society where all sectors contribute, given that I have spent so many years involved with alcohol and gambling. I am grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, for introducing the debate, since I have always believed that a society which socialises together is a stronger and healthier society. Human contact is vital and a component part of a healthy lifestyle. Those people who suffer isolation, both young and old, will suffer from health issues.

I know that some noble Lords may now be expecting me to advocate the benefits of moderate alcohol consumption and the occasional flutter. Indeed it is the case, in my entirely unqualified medical opinion, that such activities have a beneficial effect on the quality of one's life. Virtual friends can never be the same as actual friends, watching dancing is not the same as actual dancing and participating in sport is better than watching sport. Within sport, I am happy to include snooker, darts, skittles and bowling. The stay-at-home culture is a matter which should concern us all. Lonely people have high blood pressure, are more vulnerable to infection and more likely to develop both dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

The formation of clubs is almost unique to the United Kingdom, and they play a special and established role in the fabric of leisure and community activities. We have had a love of clubs throughout our history. Your Lordships may be interested to know that one of the earliest social clubs was the Everlasting Club, limited in membership to 100. The members divided their time so that there were always some present at the club, which was eventually burnt down in the Great Fire of London of 1666, when the only remaining member was nearly burnt to death because he refused to leave until he had emptied all the bottles on the table. During the 50 years of the club's existence, these 100 members smoked 50 tonnes of tobacco and drank more than 30 million pints of ale and 576,000 cases of port, besides other drinks. I thought this was perhaps slightly overindulgent but I am assured by a member of the catering team in the other place that the members of the Everlasting Club were mere lightweights. However, the catering team of your Lordships' House was not available for comment.

We should remember that the average life expectancy in 1666 was only 35. However, life expectancy has been the subject of recent news, with the average in some areas being as low as 54 and "healthy life expectancy" differing enormously within a matter of streets. We have much to do but, in so doing, let us not be too harsh on those of us who may not be regular attendees at the gym, and who may on occasion—just once in a while—have more than one round of drinks.

Samuel Johnson's dictionary definition of a club was:

"An assembly of good fellows, meeting under certain conditions". This noble House is sometimes referred to as a club by commentators who perhaps know little of its function. But if it is indeed a club, there is no doubt that it is one with the sole object of dedication to public service. I hope that in the months, years and, with the help of a healthyish lifestyle, decades to come I may prove myself to be a worthy Member of it.

5.44 pm

Baroness Neuberger (LD): My Lords, it is a great pleasure to be able to follow the noble Lord, Lord Smith of Hindhead, and congratulate him on what he had to say. His maiden speech has given us a great deal of information about his role as chief executive of the Association of Conservative Clubs and chairman of the Committee of Registered Clubs Associations, but has also made us laugh. One of the things that we enjoy in this House among all the good fellowship that the noble Lord referred to is occasionally being allowed to laugh. What the noble Lord said to us was both moving and sensible, and he has illustrated in what he had to say the essential nature of human-to-human contact—not only virtual but in fact, in clubs and associations. I very much look forward, as I know we all do, to what he has to say in future debates. If the noble Lord is not an expert, he certainly had something of substance to say, which we all valued hugely.

I also pay tribute to the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, for introducing this debate. I will contribute a few thoughts about one of the wider issues that shapes the nature of the nation's health and which many other noble Lords have referred to—the issue of loneliness and isolation. However, I want to start by talking about babies and young children and about the considerable body of evidence we now possess about the development of a child's neural networks and the fact that it is absolutely essential for parents and caregivers to talk to children and hug them. This is not only about making them feel secure and loved but about allowing their brains to develop properly.

I raise this point to draw a comparison with newspaper reports a couple of days ago, which some of your Lordships may have seen, about a major piece of research conducted by scientists at the University of Chicago. The research demonstrated that people who live alone and are lonely have signs of highly strung so-called "fight or flight" responses in their nervous systems, as well as greater numbers of a type of white blood cell that boosts inflammation. People who had this in their bloodstream were also more likely to report that they felt lonely even a year after the original study was undertaken, suggesting that the emotions and the chemistry may feed off each other or be related in some way. The academics described the loneliness as chronic and suggested that the constant stress, and its biological effects, could "amplify or prolong" people's sense of isolation, much as those who feel ill often tend, unconsciously, to avoid other people.

What can we possibly draw from this? As the right reverend Prelate said, it is that lonely people are more prone to disease; the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, said this

too. It means that loneliness is dangerous, that lonely people die earlier and that there is a real physical effect—we have heard that from many speakers around the House. Just like babies, older people need human interaction and stimulus, and the lack of it may lead to physical ill health and early death. Just as babies need human interaction for their brains to develop and grow, so adults need human interaction to keep them healthy. But with older people, the science is in its infancy, even though the psychosocial observation is commonplace. We all need to be needed.

What can we do? Along with the great charities that do much to try and reduce the isolation of lonely people, such as the Silver Line, Contact the Elderly and many others, I believe that we need to encourage everyone to contribute something to society, even if they are housebound or isolated. Housebound people can be telephone volunteers: they can buddy other isolated people and can plan activities from home. But doing this is not a free good. The people concerned would need to be chivvied, encouraged, monitored, thanked and probably trained as well. The cost is in sorting out the systems and in getting sufficiently motivated volunteer organisers to keep it going. But it would undoubtedly be life-transforming and, arguably, if the statistics are right about the actual financial cost of loneliness, let alone its emotional and social costs, worth it.

If we were to invest in this kind of loneliness-avoiding work, which is largely low-tech and easy to manage, we would create a healthier society with fewer costs to the NHS. A small investment here could make a big difference and save the public purse millions, as well as alleviating distress, loneliness, ill health and isolation. It has to be worth a try in creating a healthier society. So I very much second my noble friend Lord Crisp's call for an ad hoc committee on creating a healthy society, because I think there are practical ways in which we could do it.

5.50 pm

Lord Rea (Lab): My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, for introducing this important debate and his excellent speech. I declare an interest as a long-time trustee and now honorary president of the UK Health Forum, the public health think tank co-ordinating some 80 national organisations interested in upstream or primary prevention of non-communicable disease. The noble Lord has drawn attention to the wide spread of social and environmental factors behind our current burden of disease, and shown that many causes of those diseases lie outside the remit of the National Health Service. To prevent or delay their onset requires political and economic engagement rather than traditional public health solutions, important though they still are.

Historically, public health measures have been regarded as an imposition on individuals and industry, because they require changes in behaviour or the products of industry. They are regarded pejoratively by some as the “nanny state”—a term particularly favoured by some who may be financially affected by the changes needed to protect public health.

To divert from the general to the particular, the marketing of harmful food products could be curtailed and their composition improved by regulation and

taxation—for example, of their sugar content. Here, I echo other noble Lords. The voluntary approach, the responsibility deal, has not worked, although it has been in place for five years. If all sections of society enjoyed the health status of the best off and best educated in the population, the health status of the whole nation would be greatly improved. To achieve the noble Lord's health-creating society, we should logically consider the factors that favour the upper layer and bring them, as far as possible, to all sections of the population, to bring the bottom section closer to the top.

Most of us know the most common risk factors for heart disease, stroke, obesity, diabetes and some kinds of cancer. These are, of course, cigarette smoking, physical inactivity, poor diet and so on. It is true that the least well off have higher risk scores and that these show a gradation from the poorest to the most favoured groups of the population. A number of studies, particularly those by Sir Michael Marmot—who seems to be the father of this debate—and colleagues, have shown that when all the known risk factors are taken into account, the social gradient of health remains. The NHS can affect only a small part of these health inequalities, which have their roots in the social fabric and economy of the country.

From conception onwards, the odds are stacked against the less privileged in diet, housing, working conditions and social status. Low income is the dominant feature of the lives of the underprivileged. The environment in which children are brought up is particularly important, especially the early years from conception onwards, as other noble Lords have pointed out. Poor nutrition and social deprivation may lead to chronic disease in later life. To protect children from the effects of poverty and deprivation should be number one on the list of any policy to promote health.

In this connection, I ask the Minister about the present status and funding of Sure Start centres. They were beginning to have some effect, but some of them have had to close and others are struggling because of local government cuts. Has the Minister any news for us on Sure Start centres?

To build a resilient society, a wide range of improvements need to be made, and many or most of them have already been mentioned. Nearly every government policy has a health dimension. This should be assessed. I suggest that the Cabinet-level committee looking at the health impact of all government policy should be restored. Here I very much agree with the suggestion of my noble friend Lady Jay that a Cabinet-level Minister should look after public health.

Welfare benefits have been developed over the past century for good reason: to protect the vulnerable. To cut them further, as is still planned despite the Chancellor's decision to listen to your Lordships' House on tax credits, will diminish the health and resilience of the population.

5.55 pm

The Earl of Listowel (CB): My Lords, it is a privilege to follow the considered and humane words of the noble Lord. I, too, am most grateful to my noble friend for calling this debate, for opening it so helpfully and for his courtesy in preparing for it. I will make five points on loneliness.

[THE EARL OF LISTOWEL]

I begin by praising the Government. Evidence is clear on the benefits of employment for mental health. The Government have done a tremendous job here. The latest employment figures—with the lowest rate of unemployment since 2008 and the highest rate of employment since records began—speak to that success. That is so important in combating isolation. At my local cash desk there is a pregnant woman due to give birth in December. She had her last week at work a fortnight ago. While she has never given birth before, she was working beside a woman who has a child so she could speak to others who had given birth. She had customers going up to her to wish her well. She was not isolated. As the Minister knows very well from the recent report on perinatal mental health, we must be concerned about mothers during pregnancy becoming isolated and depressed, and the cost to the nation as a result of that. I strongly praise the Government for their achievements in this area.

I have a number of concerns. I am very worried about the housing insecurity that so many families in this country experience. I call on the Government to bring forward a strategy along the lines that the noble Baroness, Lady Jay, called for, with a senior Minister developing and implementing a strategy to address housing insecurity. Increasing numbers of children grow up homeless and in bed and breakfasts. I speak to mothers with young children who look forward to the prospect of being sent to some distant local authority outside London where they will know no one and where their child will lose their school. This is a growing problem. Of course, there is an increasing issue with questions about immigration there as well. I hope the Minister will speak to his colleagues about that.

So many looked-after children speak of the experience of care as a lonely one, going into adulthood isolated. Because of their early experiences, they may well not trust others and find it difficult to relate to them. It is imperative that, the moment that they enter care, mental health professionals provide them with a proper, dedicated mental health assessment—as the NSPCC called for—and that the services they need follow on from that.

Furthermore, I really stress to the Minister that the best difference that mental health professionals can make is to support the relationships between adoptive parents and children, foster carers and children, and residential childcare workers and children. Supporting those stable relationships over time and making them work is the best way to help these children recover from trauma, rather than, important as it is, working directly with the children. I am afraid that that is often not recognised by the health service, where, unless one is working directly with the child, it is not recognised as helpful—because the child is not seen as “sick”—to support the foster carer or residential childcare worker.

Moving on, adolescence is a time of upheaval. Anna Freud entitled her last writings on the subject, *Adolescence as a Developmental Disturbance*. There are huge challenges through adolescence. It is important to meet those and not allow adolescents to become isolated, as they so easily can be. I commend to the noble Lord the institution in north London, the Brent

Centre for Young People, which since 1989 has provided excellent specialist service in mental health for adolescents. If he ever has the time to go up there, I am sure he would find that a most interesting experience.

Early years were mentioned by the noble Baroness, Lady Neuberger, and, I think, others. I recently had the privilege of visiting a nursery in Hayes Park School, west London, and watching a nurture group in action. The Minister may be aware of the Nurture Group Network. These were eight disadvantaged three year-old children. One young girl, blonde, went up to the board, picked up a piece of paper with the word “embarrassment” on it and said “I am embarrassed”. She was shy. She was learning to talk about her feelings, as were her neighbours, so that they could communicate their feelings to each other. They sat at a table and enjoyed toast together. They may never have sat together in their own homes around a meal—they may never have had that experience—but here they were getting a chance to sit with others, to eat toast, to say “please” and “thank you”, to learn how to relate to others, so that they could be reintegrated into the larger group, know how to relate to other children, and thereby not grow up lonely and possibly depressed because they just did not know how to manage relationships with other people.

To sum up, so many people in this country, because of early disruptions in their lives, find relating to others an uncomfortable experience. If we want to build a healthy society, we really need to enable all our citizens to feel comfortable in themselves and with each other, so that they go on to lead full and productive lives. I look forward to the Minister’s response.

6.01 pm

Lord Mawson (CB): My Lords, our health is too important a matter to be left simply in the hands of doctors and health professionals; it belongs to all of us. We must all own our well-being. It no longer sits in a convenient government silo marked “Health Service”—by the way, it never has—but what does a health-creating society look like in practice; how do you turn these aspirations into practical realities on the ground, up and down this country; and how does the health service move on from its outdated silo approaches to health and make these aspirations real in local communities? Three words are used again and again in the Health and Social Care Act as the key hallmarks of a modern health service: innovation, integration and enterprise. But how do we make them real and why are there so few examples in the health service?

I have spoken frequently, in this House and elsewhere, about the 30 years I have spent in east London, establishing an entrepreneurial ecosystem built around the Bromley by Bow Centre, which today offers a fully integrated health centre, including traditional health services, yes, but also offering a wide range of employment and housing services, the opportunity to set up your own business and a wide range of artistic and creative projects, all at one point of entry. The centre today operates on 25 sites across Tower Hamlets and offers services to 36,000 patients across a network of four integrated health centres. We have also taken this

experience and a built a street in St Paul's Way in Tower Hamlets, bringing together a wide range of services and organisations, the details of which can be seen on my website and read about in *Hansard*—there is not really time to describe in detail what this has been about. There is a helpful Radio 4 feature on the website and the Minister may be interested to listen to it.

I should like to share, in the brief time I have, some of the lessons we have learnt over 30 years. Over the years, one of the most challenging and regular questions we have to answer at the Bromley by Bow Centre is how our model can be replicated. Put simply, trying to replicate something as complex and contextualised as the Bromley by Bow Centre is not possible. The reality is that the centre is a response to a series of deep-seated and complicated social conditions and has evolved over a long period, not by following a clearly established recipe, but by trial and error and a great deal of experimentation. However, that process of experimentation has not, in itself, led us to the “right answer” which can then be pinged out across the whole system so that something magical will happen.

On the contrary, one of the reasons for our success is the very process of experimentation itself and a whole range of diverse people co-creating a new way of doing things over an extended period. So it is in the design process that we have created the unique model that is Bromley by Bow and, of course, this has now also happened in St Paul's Way in Tower Hamlets. Our work is now beginning to infect the developments on the Olympic Park. A better way to frame the question is in terms of translation, rather than replication. This is a much better question and leads to a much richer answer, which is significantly different in substance and content, not just in tone. There is a basic principle behind the Bromley by Bow Centre's model, which is that you start small and grow things.

It is a basic business model. Yet in public and statutory systems, often driven by politicians, the desire is to start big. Politicians like big programmes. They like building 200 city academies across the country or more than 300 healthy living centres, which have, by the way, not withstood the test of time. Our belief is that inventing something small and growing it in context might be far more effective in the long term; it might deliver much more bespoke and locally relevant services and be far more cost-effective long term. Our thinking is not to start with the totality of the Bromley by Bow operation—its structures, systems, budgets and business plans—but to start with the small, subtle stuff that sometimes lies under the surface.

When you spend time with us, you very quickly begin to see that the most powerful influencers of our model are very simple human principles. We are talking about a range of features that are often overlooked when new services are being designed or are put into a neat box to one side and treated like they are the icing on the cake, when in fact they are the cake.

What kind of things am I talking about? Here are my top 10 to start with. The first is the quality of the human relationships and how people interact with each other. The internet is a very important tool, but it will never replace human relationships. The second is compassion, an inbuilt sense of caring between people.

There is a close correlation here with the sense that we are here to serve. The third is generosity, the idea that giving freely to people creates a sense of self-worth for both the giver and the receiver. The fourth is mutual need, recognising that none of us is fully well and that we can share our humanity together and not be compromised as professionals. The fifth is positive design and environments creating spaces that engage and provide a sense of welcome or safety, like being at home. The sixth is blurring the boundaries, as services work best when they are not in silos. We all live complex and sometimes chaotic lives, so neat solutions do not always work. The seventh is long journeys, as we are committed to generational change. So many health services seem to be obsessed with moving people on or getting them out of the door, but we believe in sticking with people. The eighth is building in fun, which is often seen as having nothing to do with work. That is a very big mistake as it is essential for success. The ninth is having big expectations. The model is all about raising aspirations and encouraging everyone, staff and clients alike, to assume it is possible. The final thing is to let go, encourage freedom to innovate and provide resources for people to be entrepreneurial.

These key features of the Bromley by Bow Centre model absolutely lend themselves to translation; we have translated them elsewhere. Every health service organisation could grapple with these features and find ways of translating them into practical changes in their own contexts. It would not lead to replications of the Bromley by Bow Centre model, but it would lead to services being transformed by shifts in culture and values. Of course, none of this is really about money or resourcing; most of it is about attitude and behaviour. Will the Minister tell the House what priority the Government give to the principles I have set out for a health creating society and what in practice are they doing to encourage this cultural change? The Minister might like to visit the street the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, and I have mentioned and see these human principles in action for himself.

6.08 pm

Baroness Walmsley (LD): My Lords, this has been an excellent debate with some fascinating speeches. I shall certainly go on the website. There were three interesting maiden speeches. I was fascinated by my noble friend Lord Foster of Bath's examples of how business and the arts can contribute to our health. Of course, I would say that as a founder member of the Parliament choir—although I am not sure that last night's excellent concert has particularly enhanced my health.

Last September at the Liberal Democrat party conference, I made a speech about the future of health provision in the UK. I did not spend all my time talking about the NHS because, like the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, I believe that the crisis in the health service cannot be resolved by the NHS alone. The noble Lord and I are clearly on the same wavelength, so I very much welcome this debate.

As many have said, health affects everything: how long we live and our well-being, achievements, family life, contribution to society and, of course, happiness. Yet the NHS is struggling. Some say it has become a

[BARONESS WALMSLEY]

sickness service rather than a health service, spending a huge amount of resource fire-fighting preventable diseases, dealing with the complex needs of an ageing population and providing ever more wonderful, but expensive, treatments.

The pressures on NHS staff are enormous, and it seems that no matter how hard they work, how much they care, and how much the Government spend, it is never enough. However, it is incredibly cost effective. Despite spending less per capita on health than most developed nations, the NHS is top in most rankings but next to bottom on living “healthy lives”. So unless we can turn around our public health problems, the pressures on the NHS will continue.

So I agree with the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, that we must stop dealing with health policy in isolation when its implications are so broad. Health should be a “whole government” responsibility, not just the job of the Department of Health. As I said to my party conference, suggesting that health is just the responsibility of the NHS is like expecting the goalkeeper to win the match on his own without the help of the other players. It should be very obvious that the rest of the team have to play their part, too.

The keys to the sustainable future of the health and social care systems are prevention, integration, innovation and “getting it right first time”. If 40% of ill health is due to diet and lifestyle, it is therefore preventable. New ways of working are also vital, and the vanguard sites, set up in response to the *NHS Five Year Forward View*, demonstrate that better care can be delivered for less if people will only work together. However, we need to ensure that competition legislation does not get in the way of providers working together. They also need the £3.8 billion announced this week to achieve that transformation, yet the Treasury says that the money will be spent on more treatments. Either the money is there to cover part of the shortfall in NHS budgets or it can be used to initiate new ways of working which will bring cost benefits in the future. It cannot do both—you cannot spend money twice.

“Getting it right first time” is the mantra of a number of ground-breaking hospitals that have shown that it is cheaper in the long run to provide excellent services first time round rather than have a lot of readmissions. We also need a complete overhaul of patient discharge and transfer arrangements, which cause bottlenecks and waste money. I am delighted that former Health Minister Paul Burstow is leading a commission on behalf of NHS providers to identify and disseminate best practice on transfers of care. More efficient working will enable the NHS to fulfil its important ambition in the wider picture of sickness prevention, and it should start at the very beginning.

A good start for a baby depends on the health and well-being of its mother and her ability to bond with her child, but perinatal mental health services are patchy—yet this is health creation at its most basic. We need a new standard, delivered everywhere, to promote the future health of the baby and the well-being of the mother. Academics believe that UK children are at a higher risk of premature death than their western European counterparts because of the growing gap between rich and poor and a lack of targeted

public health policies. But if a child is born into a low-income family, he is not automatically on a pathway to ill health, as several imaginative interventions have already shown. A new, holistic approach to child health would tackle health inequalities at source.

Moving beyond the NHS’s own role in the health-creating society, it is clear that poverty is a major cause of poor health. According to Sir Michael Marmot’s recent book, 200,000 people die prematurely every year in the UK simply because they are poor. Dealing with the economic divide would go a long way to improving the health of the country and address health inequalities.

Since the foundations of a healthy life are laid in childhood, the Department for Education has a role to play. Liberal Democrats support mandatory personal, social, health and economic education in all state-funded schools, but we still fall far short of that. Children need to know about a healthy diet, the importance of physical activity, how to recognise a respectful relationship as opposed to an abusive one, about the dangers of tobacco, drugs and alcohol, and so on. Therefore they need good-quality PSHE.

A love of sport is often developed at school, and this can stand a child’s health in good stead in the future. I really commend the daily mile, run or walked by every child in St Ninians primary school in Stirling every morning. But many children drop sport as soon as they leave school. This is where the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, local sports clubs and local government come in. But the cuts of the last five years have made it very difficult for them to provide the facilities needed—we just need to look at the number of swimming pools that have closed.

Local authorities are ideally placed to deliver public health interventions that will improve community health outcomes. Yet within a month of being in power on their own, the Conservative Government announced an immediate £200 million cut in public health funding, putting further at risk the health service’s ability to make ends meet. This and yesterday’s further cuts to local authorities are appallingly short-sighted. How can the Government justify it?

Then there is housing. Cold, damp homes foster colds, bronchitis and many other problems. We need more decent affordable homes for families to rent as well as buy, and smaller, well-insulated homes for older people. I am one of those who is currently about to downsize to a highly insulated passive house—a home for life, I hope. Successive Governments have failed on this for decades and, as the cost of energy has risen, even people who have decent homes are finding it hard to heat them. We know that the most cost-effective way to reduce energy bills is good insulation, but much of our old housing stock is poorly insulated. The Green Deal home improvement fund provided funding for energy efficiency improvements to homes, making them greener, cheaper, warmer and of course healthier. But the Conservative Government decided to cut it. Where now will people get help to make their homes warmer and healthier?

The Department for Transport does not escape responsibility. Air pollution causes major problems for asthmatics such as myself and others. Transport

policies therefore play a part. I have heard it rumoured that, alongside cutting the subsidy for solar and wind power, the Government are now planning to cut the £5,000 subsidy for electric cars. Can the Minister confirm or deny this?

If health is a whole-government issue, which I believe it is, it requires proper oversight. My answer is very slightly different from that of the noble Baroness, Lady Jay. I would like to see the Government beef up the Cabinet Committee on Health, headed by a senior Minister and involving all relevant departments at a senior level to ensure that all government policies can be scrutinised as to whether they contribute to the better health of the nation. There can be no better focus for a Government if they are truly concerned about the well-being of their people. I also believe that the Chancellor of the Exchequer should be answerable to Parliament for the health consequences of his policies.

The NHS is supported by the whole nation. It must be supported by all of government, national and local. Let us not leave it to the goalkeeper. Let us ensure that the whole team contributes to winning the cup.

6.18 pm

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath (Lab): My Lords, as we have debated public health so much, I must remind the House of my presidency of the Royal Society for Public Health.

I pay tribute to the noble Lord, Lord Crisp. He was a very distinguished chief executive in the NHS and Permanent Secretary, and more recently he has led some incredibly important work on global health issues. I thought he made a very profound speech this afternoon.

I, too, congratulate our maiden speakers, the noble Baroness, Lady Redfern, and the noble Lords, Lord Foster and Lord Smith. They were excellent maiden speeches and we very much look forward to hearing them, I hope, in the not too distant future.

We have had some amazing contributions from speakers: my noble friend Lady Jay on cross-government working; the noble Baroness, Lady Campbell, on independent living; the noble Lord, Lord Best, on housing. I find it quite remarkable that so many health and well-being boards do not have the housing sector represented, given that they are meant to be driving forward public health in their locality. We heard from the noble Baroness, Lady Masham, on the really worrying issue of sexual health programmes and policies, which risk being decimated because of the transfer of responsibility to local government.

The noble Lord, Lord Alton, spoke about the very different health and social care scene that we face now compared with 1948, yet we are still trying to work with a 1948 model. In fact, a lot of the barriers to the integration that noble Lords want to see are built into the very architecture—the targets that separate government departments set. I take the point made by the noble Baroness, Lady Walmsley, about vanguards, but until we get Whitehall to change its own architecture, it will always be driving forward the type of change that she identified with a hand behind its back.

The noble Lord, Lord Foster, talked about personal responsibilities, and the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Bristol talked about isolation, which a

number of noble Lords referred to. The noble Baroness, Lady Lane-Fox, talked about the NHS and technology. I agree with her—finally, having dabbled in this and spent a few billion pounds on the issue as well, we are on the edge of a major change in healthcare, and there are positive signs now coming through.

The noble Lord, Lord Smith, talked about human contact and the role of clubs, which I fully accept. The noble Baroness, Lady Neuberger, spoke about children and isolation, and the noble Lord, Lord Rea, spoke about the role of government in regulation and taxation, dealing with poverty in particular. The noble Earl, Lord Listowel, talked about loneliness and mentioned housing security in particular.

I thought that the noble Lord, Lord Mawson, was very interesting. He described health as an outdated silo and wondered how you translate excellence using the example of Bromley-by-Bow. I take his point. You cannot just ordain this: you have to grow it locally.

Clearly, in essence all speakers support the general point made by the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, which is that we need a paradigm shift in the way that we think about health and the role of the National Health Service. However, I am very wary of the five-year forward plan on the basis that suddenly, if we build these new models, we can actually expect to see a shift of resources from the NHS in order to fund them. I do not believe that.

If we look at the international comparisons, we spend so little on health and social care in this country. The recent OECD report showed that, of the OECD countries, we are 19th in terms of health expenditure per capita. In terms of doctors, we are 24th, nurses 19th, and hospital beds 26th, yet we know that the population will rise hugely. It has risen by 10 million in the past 10 years and it will rise hugely in the next 10 years. We have to be very careful not to think that suddenly we can turn off the tap of NHS provision by adopting this approach. All we can do is to slow down the growth.

I am very wary of people who think that the NHS can lose acute capacity. The idea that we could actually reduce the number of beds in the health service is ill-thought-out and ill-considered. It just does not accord with the reality of the pressure on the system. When I look at the five-year forward plan and the models, I can see that they are very good models, but the reason why no one believes we can reach the efficiency savings of £22 billion is that it is built on the fantasy of being able to transfer money from NHS acute care.

The other point made by the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, was about the huge range of inequalities in this country. The noble Baroness, Lady Walmsley, referred to the Commonwealth Fund, which gave us a great rating except in health outcomes. The OECD report does not give us such a good rating. Where it agrees with the Commonwealth Fund is about our appalling health status. Again, if we look at the OECD statistics for life expectancy at birth for men, we are 14th and for women we are 24th. It is the same when you look at life expectancy at 65. In terms of smoking among adults, we are 20th; we are 19th on alcohol consumption;

[LORD HUNT OF KINGS HEATH]

and on obesity, where levels are appalling, we are 27th. There are 26 countries with a better record on obesity than this country.

We could also have mentioned mental health—again there is a huge worry about the scale of mental health issues. I have seen recent research suggesting that common mental disorders are twice as frequent in carers who care for more than 20 hours a week than in the general population. We know, simply from looking at population statistics, that the number of carers will have to grow hugely in the next few years.

The challenge is immense. I have to say to the noble Lord, Lord Prior, that the great thing in the five-year forward plan was the reference in a managerial document to the importance of health. That is the first time I have seen it so explicitly expressed. Yet, we see the public health budget being cut. It is so hard to fathom how a Government could do that. I hope that the noble Lord, Lord Prior, will address that in his response.

On the issue of Whitehall working, I agree with my noble friend Lady Jay. We used to have public service agreement targets which tied in different government departments into a common goal. I know that we can overdo targets, and I suspect we did, but there is no doubt that if different departments can be tied into a target that is enforced either by the Treasury, the Cabinet Office, or often by Downing Street, something does get done. This Government do not really do that.

We can see that in relation to the Department for Education. The Department for Education seems to be totally isolated from anything else in public policy in Whitehall. We debated a Bill on education recently. It is bizarre that, in respect of the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, which is all about the devolution of powers from Whitehall to the combined authorities, the Department for Education seems to know nothing about it and wants to have nothing to do with it. If we take the issue of obesity and the points raised by noble Lords on the lack of activity in PE, again the Department for Education is oblivious to this and its outcomes.

The DCMS is another example of a government department that does not understand Whitehall working at all. I have read its recent sports strategy. It is true that the Department of Health has a half-page in it, but why on earth is DCMS not doing, along with the Department of Health, a sports and health strategy?

In conclusion, this has been a great debate, but I would say to the noble Lord, Lord Prior, that the Government can do much; they cannot do everything. They can give leadership, and in this regard that is what this debate is asking for.

6.28 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health (Lord Prior of Brampton) (Con): My Lords, I shall try to do this without hesitation, repetition or deviation, but I fear I shall fail on all three counts.

First, I echo what all noble Lords have said and thank the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, for introducing this debate, which has been fascinating. He brings to it a

lifetime of experience in healthcare, both in the NHS in the UK and, of course, globally. He mentioned two quotes in his speech. The first was:

“Modern societies actively market unhealthy life styles”.

In a sense, that lies at the heart of much of what he said.

He also referred to the African saying: health is made at home, hospitals are for repairs. That is something we should take to heart. He has always said that we have much to learn from other countries, and perhaps we can learn a great deal from that particular saying.

I want to pick up some of the important issues raised by noble Lords in this debate. The noble Baroness, Lady Jay, talked about localism, about which she has some reservations. I suspect that that is an issue we will come to many times over the next few years. While I do not regard her as “a centralised dinosaur”, as she put it, the thrust of much of government policy over the course of this Parliament will be very much towards accountable localism.

The noble Baroness, Lady Williams, started her speech by almost praying for a whole-party approach to healthcare. It is probably unlikely, but it would be nice. She talked about prevention and education. I think that the curriculum for those aged up to 14 now has more time for nutrition and healthy eating, but she and other noble Lords mentioned the lack of time for PE. She also talked about mental health, domestic violence and equality of treatment for those suffering from mental health issues, something we all support in this House.

The noble Baroness, Lady Campbell, spoke movingly about what she called the empowerment model of putting patients—service users, or clients—much more in charge. We should not be so hamstrung by the medical model that has dominated healthcare for so long.

I congratulate my noble friend Lady Redfern on her wonderful maiden speech. She talked about nutrition—perhaps not surprisingly, as she said that she comes from a place where beetroot and celery are much talked about. She also talked about rehabilitation and reablement. Acute hospitals need to do a lot in the field of rehabilitation and reablement so that we can get much earlier discharge of care.

The noble Lord, Lord Best, reminded us that housing and health used to be part of the same department. I do not know how many years ago that was, but it is an interesting observation. He reminded us that home can become a trap, a prison—indeed, a fridge if the temperature is not right. Those were very important observations.

The noble Baroness, Lady Masham, talked very powerfully about the Paralympics and the power of sport. However, she also reminded us that there is no room for complacency about infectious disease and the treatment of people with drug and alcohol problems, and, of course, about the importance of hospital food.

I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Foster, on his maiden speech. Like many of us, he was once a young rising star, but sadly those days are behind most of us. What he had to say about personal responsibility is

very important. We can look to the state and to government institutions, but we need to take responsibility for ourselves as well, wherever possible.

The noble Lord, Lord Alton, made some very interesting comments about variation across the system. It is patchy. We talk about a National Health Service, but it is very different depending on where you live. It was interesting to hear him say that 660 million antidepressants have been prescribed where the underlying problem is loneliness, and that medicine is not a remedy for that. The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Bristol quoted John Donne:

“No man is an island”.

We are all “part of the main”. I fear that the bell might be tolling for myself this evening, but he again made a very strong point. Social isolation and loneliness were common themes from many of your Lordships.

The noble Baroness, Lady Lane-Fox, knows a great deal about the internet. When she said that the organising principle of our age is the internet, she made a profound point. I have absolutely no doubt that the power of the mobile phone and of the various apps being developed will reshape healthcare. It will shift power away from medical professionals towards individual users. I believe that there is now an app that can monitor your life signs from a drop of blood taken once a month. That is hugely powerful. She warned us of the risk that so much of this technology is concentrated in a small number of highly successful technology firms based in California. We need to be well aware of that.

My noble friend Lord Smith talked about the importance of clubs, participation and social interaction. He reminded me of Burke’s “little platoons”, which are such an important part of society. He also reminded us that in 1666, the average life expectancy was 35, so we have come a long way since then.

The noble Baroness, Lady Neuberger, talked about loneliness and how hugging a young baby or child actually helps develop their brain. It is not just about the very young, but the old as well. Lonely people suffer both physically and mentally. We all love human interaction and know that it is not just the elderly who suffer from isolation; many parts of society suffer from loneliness. I fear that computers have not done us proud when it comes to interacting as individuals with others.

The noble Lord, Lord Rea, talked about the importance of primary prevention. He quoted from Sir Michael Marmot’s book on health inequalities, which, of course, is very powerful. I will write to him, if I may, on Sure Start centres after this debate. The noble Earl, Lord Listowel, talked before to me about loneliness and isolation, in particular the importance of relationships for looked-after children, adolescents and those in their early years. I am not familiar with the Bromley-by-Bow model raised by the noble Lord, Lord Mawson, but I would like to learn about it. I was fascinated by his strictures about replication: you cannot just pick up a model in Bromley and dump it in Birmingham, or probably in any other part of London. There are aspects, however, that can be translated. He said it is always better to start small, rather than trying to start big. In the NHS, we perhaps get ahead of ourselves sometimes.

I turn to the comments made by the noble Baroness, Lady Walmsley, and the noble Lord, Lord Hunt. This has been an important debate that reaches across a wide part of government. It raises issues that are not just pertinent to this country, but global. At their base, they reflect the fact that our population is increasingly elderly and people are suffering from many chronic long-term conditions. Lifestyles are causing a growing disease burden, particularly from obesity but also from alcohol and smoking. People’s expectations are changing all the time, and, of course, the cost of new surgical and pharmaceutical developments is huge. I suspect that genomic development and genomics will only add to those costs.

At the moment, however you measure how we fund these things—whether it is 16% of national wealth in America or more like 8.5% in this country or 11% in Germany—healthcare is consuming a vast amount of our GNP. Whatever health system you are in, there is an issue of sustainability. I believe that a strong economy is fundamental to any strategy that any of our parties would wish to have. We must have a strong economy, but that is not just so that we can afford better healthcare: it is actually more profound than that. It is because we have a strong economy that we will have high levels of employment. Work is a critical part of addressing some of the concerns of my noble friend Lord Crisp. If people have decent employment, they will tend to have higher levels of physical and mental health.

Education is also fundamental. It was Sir Michael Marmot, I think—or somebody else—who said that you could pretty much predict people’s future lifestyles from the age of 11. If their educational attainment is well below average at the age of 11, the outlook for the rest of their lives is not good. We also need to consider that the transition from adolescence into adulthood is also a critically important time. So I welcome the last Government’s and this Government’s increased commitment to apprenticeships.

The life expectancy of people living in Kensington and Chelsea was referred to earlier in the debate. I think I am right in saying that the life expectancy of people living in Salford is something like 25 years less than that of people living in Kensington. That cannot be explained just by reference to healthcare. Healthcare is demonstrably a very small explanatory component of such a difference in life expectancy. The differences are much more profound than just those associated with the NHS. When we talk about the health of the nation, it is tempting to focus just on the NHS, but it is only a very small part of it.

I wish to expand on devolution a little more because the driving force for devolution, particularly in Manchester but increasingly in the Black Country and other parts of the country, is to try to get greater economic regeneration. I believe that that, together with devolving more power to local authorities, will help to build a healthier society. I do not want to make a party-political point on this at all but I congratulate the principles underlying the work that Iain Duncan Smith has done in developing the universal benefit to try to make it easier for people to move from welfare into work. It is my fundamental belief that work is a crucial part of building a healthier society.

[LORD PRIOR OF BRAMPTON]

I wish to give noble Lords two quotes. Having said that the NHS is not a big part of this, I want to dwell briefly on it. The first quote is from the NHS Plan 2000. Perhaps the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, was a member of the Government in 2000. The NHS Plan states:

“The NHS is a 1940s system operating in a 21st century world”.

I believe that that comment, made in 2000, was profound. Now here we are in 2015 and the *NHS Five Year Forward View* states that,

“there is broad consensus on what that future needs to be. ... It is a future that dissolves the classic divide, set almost in stone since 1948, between family doctors and hospitals, between physical and mental health, between health and social care, between prevention and treatment. One that no longer sees expertise locked into often out-dated buildings, with services fragmented, patients having to visit multiple professionals for multiple appointments, endlessly repeating their details because they use separate paper records. One organised to support people with multiple health conditions, not just single diseases”.

So we all know what the issue is and yet getting change in the NHS has proved extremely difficult. I take issue with the noble Lord, Lord Hunt: I think that we have to push these new models of care and treat more people outside hospital settings, not because it is lower cost but because it is better care.

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: I am not arguing against the models; all I am saying is that I think there is a simplistic view that, if you develop the models, you can reduce the pressure on your acute care capacity. I, and I think many commentators, are doubtful about that, given that our acute care capacity is so much less than that of most comparable countries. That is the point I was making.

Lord Prior of Brampton: I understand that fully. To be clear, at the heart of the *Five Year Forward View* are both the new care models—the vanguards referred to by the noble Baroness, Lady Walmsley—and a change in productivity. I wish to dwell on productivity for a minute because the NHS is a lean system. I do not argue against that at all. It is a very high-value system. I was at a meeting with people from the Mayo clinic very recently and they said that they felt the NHS was the highest value healthcare system in the world. That does not mean that it is perfect. However, although we are always highly critical of it, by world standards it is a very good system.

We are going to address productivity through using much greater transparency—using the work of the noble Lord, Lord Carter—as well as trying to get a much higher degree of clinical engagement so that we get real traction. In the past we have had a top-down approach to try to drive through productivity improvements. This time we hope to have a much more bottom-up approach, with a much higher degree of clinical engagement.

The noble Lord, Lord Crisp, divided this issue into three, and the third aspect was the most important. The message is that it can be done. For example, the number of teenage pregnancies has been reduced by half. The number of people who die in fires has been

reduced by half. Smoking prevalence has come down from 40% to 18%. Health-acquired infections such as MRSA and C. diff have come down very significantly. We can do it, if people work together.

Some of your Lordships may have read the McKinsey Global Institute report into obesity. It is a very good report. Obesity is a global problem: 2.1 billion people in the world are overweight—30% of the global population. It is going to rise to 50% by 2030. It costs billions of pounds and wrecks millions of lives. The McKinsey analysis makes three good points. First, there is no single intervention—no silver bullet. It is not just passing a sugar tax or a new regulation. In its view, when it comes to tackling obesity there are 74 separate interventions that must be done: housing, education, personal responsibility—it is a combination of all these things. Secondly, no part of society can do it on its own. It cannot just be top-down from government. It cannot just be bottom-up from individuals or the community. It has to be top-down, bottom-up and in between. Thirdly, you can never have all the evidence. If we wait until we have all the evidence about every single intervention, we will end up doing nothing. That is quite a good illustration of what the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, is aiming at. If we are going to have an effective strategy for obesity, which we will be revealing early in the new year, it has to be multifaceted. There is no silver bullet.

Treating illness is the tip of the iceberg that we all focus on but the much greater part of the iceberg is below the water. Improving and reducing health inequalities will require an effort that goes way beyond the NHS. Of course, the NHS has a big part to play but there is a much bigger and wider role for society as a whole. I thank the noble Lord, Lord Crisp, for raising this issue. It has been a fascinating debate and I look forward to pursuing discussions with him and others outside the Chamber.

6.48 pm

Lord Crisp: My Lords, as I said at the beginning of the debate, I am very conscious that this is the last business of the day, so I will not detain the House for any length of time. I just want to thank noble Lords for the outstanding contributions from all parts of the House and for the wisdom, experience, imagination, practicality and practical experience that they have brought to bear to the debate. I have learnt a lot, not least about the Isle of Axholme and Bath, and indeed I intend to visit the Hindhead Tunnel—when I say it like that, I make it sound a bit like a pub, which is perhaps appropriate.

We have heard three impressive maiden speeches covering the health and well-being hubs in north Lincolnshire, personal responsibility and the role that government should play, and the importance—this was also drawn out by other noble Lords—of sociability and social networks.

There are four big themes, which I shall set out briefly. The first is the role of the Government. At the beginning of the debate, the noble Baroness, Lady Jay, spoke about needing a Cabinet-level Minister to provide some real drive and traction. The second theme, which I was slightly surprised to hear so much about, concerns

relationships, sociability and loneliness. Many noble Lords raised that issue, which is of fundamental importance. The third theme is concern about vulnerable people and inequality, with the recognition that we understand that social structures affect health. The final theme is innovation and imagination, and the fact that there are new things which we can do and which we need to deploy.

Noble Lords will not be surprised to hear that I do not want to leave this subject here. A lot is happening but, as I said at the beginning, it is not being done with enough scale and co-ordination—or perhaps “oomph”, to use a technical expression. Therefore, I will be

pressing for an ad hoc committee to dive deeper into these issues and to find practical ways of moving this issue forward.

Motion agreed.

Draft Investigatory Powers Bill

Message from the Commons

A message was received from the Commons concurring that the Joint Committee on the draft Bill should report by 11 February 2016.

House adjourned at 6.51 pm.

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