

Mentions of Oxford and Oxbridge in Parliament

Date: February 2016

Commons: Centre for Business taxation mention in debate on tax avoidance
Commons: Unnamed Oxford research on mental health and work assessments.
Commons: Migration Observatory mention at Home Affairs select committee hearing on immigration directorates.
Commons: Evidence to Science and Technology Committee on Zika Virus
Commons: Mention of research fellowship in debate on Crohns disease
Commons: Mention of Paul Murphy and work done to widen access in debate on social mobility.
Commons: Mention of Labour Club in questions to Attorney General
Lords: Mention of Migration Observatory in question on removing students from the migration cap.
Lords: Mention of access requirements in debate on Baccalaureate
Lords: Mention of new VC's words in debate on free speech at universities
Lords: Mentions of Labour Club and Islamic Centre in debate on the understanding of the Middle East.

Commons

Research

MPs debate tax avoidance and multinational companies

Wed, 3 February 2016 | Debate - Adjournment and General

Chris Philp (Croydon South) (Con):

In preparing for this debate, I was keen to see some facts about the Government's record, so I turned to a study published by the [Oxford University](#) Centre for Business Taxation, probably the most academically reputable institution in the area of corporation tax. The report it published in February of last year identifies 42 separate measures that the Government have taken since 2010 to clamp down on corporation tax avoidance and evasion. They are forecast to raise £34 billion. I strongly welcome the measures that the Financial Secretary and his colleagues have taken in this area, which include the diverted profits tax and the general anti-abuse rule. The Government have also increased capital gains tax from 18% to 26%, dealing with a loophole that was being widely exploited by some hedge funds to end up paying rates of tax below that of their cleaners. The Government's record in this area does bear scrutiny. Indeed, Richard Murphy, who describes himself as the "father of Corbynomics" declared himself pleased and surprised at the progress made in this area since 2010, which includes

the BEPS initiative, which the UK Government have been strongly pushing.

MPs debate Work Capability Assessments

Tue, 9 February 2016 | Debate - Adjournment and General

Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): We know that today's debate is important because, in my constituency of North Ayrshire and Arran and in constituencies across the entire UK, some of our most vulnerable people—those with long-term and quite debilitating health conditions—are relying on us to be their voice. People who have undergone the work capability assessment tell us that they find the entire process at best demeaning, and at worst intimidating. It is a cause of deep distress, which is particularly alarming when one considers that some claimants live with challenging health and mental health conditions and find going through such assessments almost more than they can bear. The assessments can exacerbate or even precipitate mental health problems.

New research from the universities of Liverpool and [Oxford](#) has found that in areas where more people are assessed for employment and support allowance there is a greater increase in mental health conditions, prescriptions for antidepressants and even the number of suicides. The research estimates that that may have led to 590 additional suicides. The research is robust and suggests a correlation between mental health problems and the roll-out of work capability assessments. The result of the research is sobering for us all.

Home Affairs Committee - Immigration Minister James Brokenshire, Immigration Enforcement Directorate, UK Visas and Immigration Directorate - The work of the Immigration Directorates 2015 Q3

Tue, 9 February 2016 |

Naz Shah: Minister, I have huge concerns because the majority of my casework in Bradford West is around constituencies, around immigration, and we are above the 60% mark. The [Migration Observatory](#) of [Oxford University](#) calculated that 41% of British citizens would not meet the threshold that you have set. We also have estimates of 15,000 children being kept apart from families because of this threshold that you have put in. My struggle, and I would really like your views on this, is that on one hand this Government expect people to live in absolute, abject poverty in some cases in terms of benefits for sanctions and so on, yet when it comes to migration, in terms of Bradford I do not feel you have taken the geographical context of poverty, jobs, unemployment, educational attainment. Most people do not have a chance to meet these criteria, so I would say it is discriminatory, particularly when you have EU nationals who do not have to demonstrate links.

Science and Technology Committee (Commons) - University of Glasgow, Public Health England, Department of Health, University of Oxford - Zika virus

Wed, 10 February 2016 |

The Committee heard from:

- Dr Alain Kohl, MRC Programme Leader, University of Glasgow
- Professor Dilys Morgan, Head, Gastrointestinal, Emerging and Zoonotic Infections Department, Public Health England

- Graeme Tunbridge, Deputy Director, Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response, Department of Health
- Professor Peter Horby, Professor of Emerging Infectious Diseases & Global Health, Centre for Tropical Medicine and Global Health, **University of Oxford**

MPs debate treatment of Crohn's and colitis sufferers in England

Wed, 24 February 2016 | Debate - Adjournment and General

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Jane Ellison):.....Members quite rightly drew the House's attention to research and the need to know more. Dealing with a disease that currently has no cure is a big challenge, and research is key. The Department of Health currently spends more than £1 billion a year on research. As for IBD, the Department's National Institute for Health Research awarded a £1.5 million research professorship for five years from 2013 to 2018 at the **University of Oxford** to examine the use of molecular techniques to re-stratify Crohn's disease, aiming to get into the detail of identifying patients amenable to new treatment approaches and to develop new therapies. The NIHR is also investing just under £1 million in a study comparing the accuracy of MRI imaging and small bowel ultrasound in assessing the extent and activity of newly diagnosed and relapsed Crohn's disease. The final report from the study is expected to be published in September 2017, and I am sure that there will be interest in that among Members.

Education

Access and Influence

MPs debate the social mobility index

Tue, 9 February 2016 |

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab):My hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Siobhain McDonagh) spoke very well about the influence and importance of good schools. My hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders) spoke with great authority in his role as the chair of the all-party group on social mobility.

Prior to coming to this House, I was involved for many years—well over 10—in Oxford admissions and examining work that could be done to address the problem of how we could attract applicants from a wider range of backgrounds. I was very proud to play a part in the **Oxbridge** ambassador for Wales project, which was run by my predecessor as the MP for Torfaen, Paul Murphy, who is now Lord Murphy of Torfaen in the other place. The project aimed to increase the diversity of **Oxbridge** applicants.

I was very sorry to see the Prime Minister's attack in recent weeks on diversity at **Oxford and Cambridge**. Although I absolutely agree that there has to be greater diversity, the first thing that concerned me about the Prime Minister's comments was the lack of acknowledgment of work that has already been done. Let me just give an example. In the period from 2005 to 2010, the number of applications to Russell Group universities rose far more quickly from students on free school meals than from students who were not. That is evidence of social mobility during those years.

The second thing that worried me was that the Prime Minister sought to avoid blame for the consequences of his own policies and to push it away somewhere else. My hon. Friend the Member

for Ellesmere Port and Neston spoke, for example, about the abolition of nursing bursaries. However, there is a deeper point here. Let us remember that for all the talk of worklessness, 1.5 million children who are in poverty are in working households. That is what the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission says.

Other

Oral Answers to Questions

Thursday 25th February: Attorney general

Michael Ellis (Northampton North) (Con): Part of the UK's human rights obligations is to ensure that minority communities are not subjected to harassment and distress. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that allegations of rabid anti-Semitic behaviour from the **Oxford University** Labour club are a disgrace to Oxford and no doubt an embarrassment to the Labour party, and they should be dealt with robustly by the University, if not by other authorities?

The Attorney General: I agree with my hon. Friend: these are very troubling allegations, and I hope they are dealt with swiftly and effectively. However, he makes the important point that all of us, on both sides of the House, believe in the protection of human rights and in rules and laws that allow that protection to happen. What we are not in favour of is the perversion of human rights law by the introduction of silly cases that should not be before the courts at all. That obscures the important work my hon. Friend is referring to.

Lords

Research

Immigration: Students
Question for Short Debate

Asked by Baroness Sharp of Guildford

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to removing international students from the net migration figures by including them as non-immigrant admissions, as is done in the United States.

Baroness Sharp of Guildford (LD): My Lords, in introducing this short debate I declare two interests: I am an honorary fellow of Birkbeck College and I am the treasurer of the All-Party Parliamentary University Group. I should also say that I am looking forward enormously to hearing the maiden speech of the noble Baroness, Lady Brown of Cambridge, whose very distinguished record in science, technology and universities precedes her.....

.....In relation to the IPS, there is much controversy over its validity. There are good figures because of visas and university registrations for new entrants, but although attempts are being made to collate exit records, these are as yet in their infancy, which is why reliance has to be placed on the

IPS. Even the Oxford-based **Migration Observatory** concluded that the statistics were unreliable and that the temporariness of international students remains uncertain.

Education

Lords debate the requirements of the English Baccalaureate

Thu, 4 February 2016

Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Lab): My Lords, I, too, thank the noble Earl, Lord Clancarty, for promoting the debate and for the persuasive way in which he introduced it. Despite the views of most education professionals, the Government are determined to press ahead with their aim of having 90% of GCSE students take the EBacc by 2020. We understand that the driving force in this is the Minister of State for Schools, Mr Gibb, who seems to be in thrall to E.D. Hirsch and his theory of the core knowledge system, which above all is characterised by one word: inflexibility....

....We can all appreciate the essential nature of English, maths and science, but for modern and ancient languages, much less so. On history or geography, I must ask, why? The Minister may be interested to know that someone applying to study geography at **Oxford University** does not require an A-level in geography.

Access and Influence

Other

Lords Oral Question - Universities: Freedom of Speech

Mon, 22 February 2016 | House of Lords - Oral Question

Asked by Baroness Deech

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure freedom of lawful speech at universities, in the light of recent disruptions to speeches.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park (Con): My Lords, the principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech at universities are enshrined in statute. Universities have a clear and unambiguous duty to ensure that legal and lawful views can be heard but, equally, can be robustly challenged and debated. We will continue to support fully those universities which show clear and strong leadership in doing this.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: There is a good, strong relationship between vice-chancellors and students in many universities. Indeed, as Louise Richardson, vice-chancellor of **Oxford University**, has said, students must learn to engage with ideas that they find objectionable and be more willing to debate with opponents to try to change their minds. Statements like that from vice-chancellors, encouraging students and making clear the need to debate and argue about ideas, are very positive.

Lords debate steps to increase understanding of the Middle East

Tue, 23 February 2016 | Debate - Adjournment and General

Middle East

Question for Short Debate

Asked by Lord Grade of Yarmouth

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase understanding of the Middle East.

Lord Grade of Yarmouth (Con):At the outset, let me declare my interest: I am Jewish and I support the right of the State of Israel to live at peace. However, that does not mean that I believe that the country's Governments are beyond criticism; nor do I believe that any critic of Israeli policy is automatically anti-Semitic. That having been said, what I hope this short debate will concentrate on is how we might promote better understanding of one of the most contentious issues of our time.

Let me start, topically, with freedom of speech. Just yesterday, the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, who is in her place this evening, and other noble Lords spoke with eloquence and passion on the intimidating environment in our scholarly communities which is suppressing constructive discussion on the Middle East. The vicious approach to debate, or rather to the stifling of debate, taken by some—for example, those who violently disrupted an Israeli speaker at King's College, London, last month—does nothing to foster greater understanding of the Middle East in the UK; quite the contrary. The KCL Action Palestine society, which spearheaded the disruption of KCL's Israel society event, is a committed supporter of the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement. The BDS movement continually smears the only democratic state in the region by comparing Israel to the apartheid South African regime of yesteryear.To achieve its ends, in recent years BDS has engineered votes to boycott Israel at some of our top universities, which really should know better. In recent months, students at the School of Oriental and African Studies voted overwhelmingly to boycott Israel, and only last week the co-chair of the **Oxford University** Labour Club, Alex Chalmers, while lamenting that much of the student left has,

"some kind of problem with Jews",

..... Parliament is at the heart of the academic issue. There is a blatant double standard here, which we as legislators have not addressed. There is evidence that we permit the funding of some educational departments by authoritarian states with abhorrent track records on human rights and free expression, yet UK institutions are somehow at the forefront of calls to ban Israeli academics and students on the basis of their nationality and, probably, their religion. The connection between the funding of universities by vehemently anti-Israel regimes, the constraining of free expression and referenda to ban Israelis must be exposed.

Baroness Deech (CB):

.....Our universities have accepted money from various repressive Arab regimes—money directed almost exclusively at teaching Middle Eastern studies and putting in place curricula and professors subscribing to that point of view. An example is the Islamic Centre at **Oxford**, which has received £75 million from Saudi Arabia and other such regimes. The same is true of nearly

every professorial post in this subject. I hope that the Minister will announce an inquiry into the foreign funding of our universities and that university donations are to be made public.

8.06 pm

Lord Patten (Con): The lightning conductor and fulcrum of Middle Eastern misunderstanding since the late 1940s has been the state of Israel with its polyglot and talented population. Understanding the Middle East today, almost 70 years on, must begin at home in the United Kingdom, which has a particular historical role as the colonial power in Palestine during the run-up to the creation of Israel in 1948. We have not managed so far, despite best efforts, to be at all successful in eradicating anti-Semitism at home in the United Kingdom and thus cannot be sure of our standing in getting greater understanding of Israel, which feels under deadly threat just as some Palestinians feel the same.

Only this month we had, as my noble friend Lord Grade said in his notable speech, seen a particularly nasty outbreak of anti-Semitism among the members of one particular political club in **Oxford**, its co-chairman resigning as he thought some of its members had “poisonous” attitudes made intolerant statements and had,

“some kind of problem with Jews”.

That 70 years on these attitudes prevail in what should be a bastion of liberalism and tolerance is completely shameful, so robust action must be taken where and when reason is missing. I thus congratulate very warmly the Government on their stand against local authorities who now wish to boycott Israeli goods as their own little contribution to Middle Eastern understanding—nowhere else, just Israeli goods. I want my local authority to deal with flood prevention and potholes rather than developing their own foreign policy in direct contravention of the rules of the World Trade Organisation with the sole aim of undermining and delegitimising one state and one state only in the Middle East—the state of Israel.

I say all that not as a Jew but as a Roman Catholic. There are a lot of my lot in Jerusalem and I want them to stay there. I am extremely grateful to the Government of Israel for protecting them and for making it possible for Roman Catholics and other Christians to be in Jerusalem and not to be cleansed and cleared out, as they have been in so many other parts of the Middle East.....

.....Lord Beecham (Lab): My Lords, I declare my interest as vice-chairman of the New Israel Fund UK and as a former chairman of the **Oxford University** Labour Club.

When I attended the annual NIF human rights award dinner last November, I was privileged to hear the son of Yitzhak Rabin calling for greater efforts to promote peace, and award winners, who included an Arab-Israeli woman who worked with, among others, Russian Jewish immigrants and a Jewish man who worked with Israeli Arabs who was opposed to the price tag extremists. It occurred to me that, sadly, it was virtually impossible to conceive of any other country in the region for which a human rights award ceremony could be held. The sad loss of life in Gaza has been exceeded more than a hundredfold in Syria, where more people have been displaced than the total population of Israel.

