

Mentions of Oxford and Oxbridge in Parliament

October 2015

Commons: Committee stage of the Immigration Bill

Lords: Debate on education and employment

Lords: Social Mobility Committee, evidence

Lords: Constitution Committee, evidence

Lords: Oral question, mention

Commons

Access and Influence

Education

Research

Commons Committee Stage - Immigration Bill (7th and 8th sittings) Thu, 29 October 2015 | Committee Stage Debate

Keir Starmer (Lab):

I turn to amendment 86 and the Government's shameful attempt to allow children to be summarily evicted by changing the wording of those named in a residential tenancy agreement from "adult" to "person". Oxfam and **Oxford University** research suggests that irregular migrant children are already at risk of destitution, exploitation and social exclusion before the Bill is implemented.

Other

Lords

Access and Influence

Lords debate creating the right education and employment opportunities in the UK

Thu, 22 October 2015 |

MENTION

Lord Fink (Con): ...Good academies with great teaching staff are achieving remarkable results for the most disadvantaged pupils. In fact, most Ark academies—we have several dozen now—are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted and achieve results well above the national average, despite poverty levels among their intake and prior attainment which would suggest that the students would achieve results markedly lower. I have to pay tribute to the executives at Ark, led by Lucy Heller, and the staff and senior leadership teams at our schools for these achievements and for their incredibly hard work. These schools are managing to get some of the poorest students into the best universities in the country, including **Oxford and Cambridge**. Many of the others go on to very useful jobs indeed, including some to apprenticeships, although I will leave that subject to others who know far more about it than me. But what is important to me is that whatever their pathway, the school helps them identify the right pathway, and the students have the confidence and resilience to shine at universities or places of work due to the extra work, initiatives and experiences that have been gained in school.

Education

Research

Social Mobility Committee - Cass Business School, Education and Employers Charity, University of Oxford

Wed, 14 October 2015

The Committee heard from:

- Dr Peter Grant, Lecturer in Voluntary Sector Management, Cass Business School
- Mr Nick Chambers, Director, Education and Employers Charity
- Professor Ewart Keep, Director, Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance, **University of Oxford**

Examination of Witnesses

Dr Peter Grant, Lecturer in Voluntary Sector Management, Cass Business School, Mr Nick Chambers, Director, Education and Employers Charity, and Professor Ewart Keep, Director, Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance, **University of Oxford**.

Q45 The Chairman: Thank you very much for appearing before us today. This session is open to the public. A webcast of the session goes out live and is subsequently accessible via the parliamentary website. A verbatim transcript of your evidence will be produced and it will be put on the parliamentary website. A few days after the session you will receive a copy of the transcript which we would ask you to check for accuracy and send in any corrections as quickly as possible. After the session, if you want to amplify or clarify any points that arise during the evidence session or make any additional points, which I am sure would be very helpful, you are welcome to submit any supplementary written evidence to us. It would be very helpful if you could introduce yourselves for the record before we move on to the formal session.

Mr Nick Chambers: Nick Chambers. I am the Director of a charity called the Education and

Employers Charity.

Dr Peter Grant: Dr Peter Grant. I am a Senior Fellow in Grantmaking, Philanthropy and Social Investment at the Cass Business School, City University.

Professor Ewart Keep: Professor Ewart Keep, Director of the Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance, Education Department at **Oxford University**.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. We have heard that there has been quite a strong policy focus on increasing the appetite of employers in relation to inputs into the skills system to offer access to the workplace. What has been raised in the work that you have done in relation to employee engagement with intermediate skills, life skills and employer ownership? Do not feel that you all need to reply, but as appropriate.

Professor Ewart Keep: I'll give you a starter for 10. Part of the problem has been that historically both employers and Government over the last 20 to 25 years have looked to fill quite a lot of intermediate skill demand not through the traditional apprenticeship route but through expanding higher education. One problem has been that employers have made an entirely rational calculation that as they very rarely have to pay the direct costs of education this is a very satisfactory arrangement, at least from their point of view. Some of them now realise it is less satisfactory, as they get people who do not have the kinds of practical skills that they might require. Obviously there is a very large sectoral effect. There are certain sectors where as an employer the only way you can get the skills you need is through some kind of apprenticeship or work-based training. The construction and engineering industries would be the two classic sectors where it is very difficult to rely simply on external college-based or university-based provision. In a lot of other areas there has been a tendency to think expanding higher education is going to be the answer. Now we are having a re-think. We have institutes of technology for sub-degree provision on the table as the new answer for what people do post-19. There is a difficulty in getting a lot of employers to understand what responsibilities they need to fulfil to deliver a high-quality apprenticeship system. A lot of them are so out of practice that they are really struggling with the idea of what a high-quality level 3 and above apprenticeship would look like.

Constitution Committee - University of Edinburgh, Nuffield College, University of Ulster- the Union and Devolution

Wed, 28 October 2015

During a session on the Union and Devolution, the Committee heard from:

- Professor Charlie Jeffery, University of Edinburgh
- Professor Jim Gallagher, Nuffield College, **University of Oxford**
- Professor Alan Trench, University of Ulster

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Members present Lord Lang of Monkton (Chairman) Lord Brennan Lord Cullen of Whitekirk Lord Hunt of Wirral Lord Judge Lord MacGregor of Pulham Market Lord MacLennan of Rogart Lord Morgan Lord Norton of Louth Baroness Taylor of Bolton

Examination of Witnesses Professor Charlie Jeffery, University of Edinburgh, Professor Jim Gallagher, Nuffield College, **University of Oxford**, and Professor Alan Trench, University of Ulster

Q44 The Chairman: I welcome our three distinguished witnesses, all of whom have vast experience in constitutional and devolution issues. You are aware of the size and scale of the task we are undertaking and I think that with your particular skills we shall be able to cover a lot of it. Professor Jeffery is Senior Vice-Principal of Edinburgh University; apart from his many other activities, he was a member of the McKay commission, which is quite important in the context of where we are now. Professor Gallagher was the senior Whitehall civil servant involved in devolution for quite some time,

Visiting Professor at Glasgow University and author of quite a lot of literature on this subject. He has achieved great things since the time when he was my Private Secretary.

Professor Jim Gallagher: It was the training.

The Chairman: You took that fly very effectively.

Professor Alan Trench, again, is very well-known. He is a Research Associate for the Constitution Unit of University College London and was an adviser to our Committee on the Barnett formula, which came up with a successful and effective report many years ago—it was immediately shelved by all political parties, which were frightened to tackle it.

You have all seen a list of questions that we will probably want to touch on and I hope that we will explore all those areas. I want to ask you all, as a general Second Reading approach: how deep is the damage to the UK that you see from where we are at present? What sort of action do you think in general terms is needed on the union and on the four nations, which I will call them for shorthand, to stabilise matters?

Professor Charlie Jeffery: Thank you very much, Chairman. That is a very big, expansive question, and I think it needs to be addressed partly in a historical sense. I think we have seen a failure since the mid-1990s, when we embarked on the devolution journey, of the central institutions of the UK to think about the coherence of the territorial constitution alongside the measures for decentralisation of that constitution. Since then, we have seen a pattern of reaction and often of tactical response that is very short-termist in its thinking and piecemeal in the way in which it treats each individual part of the UK. There are plenty of examples of that; I will focus just now on the Scottish one.

Our initial devolution settlement had a period of stability, right through to the point when the Scottish National Party became the governing party, at which point there was a response, in which Professor Gallagher was involved. That response led to what became the Scotland Bill, and we have seen that responsive mode again more recently. In fact we have in effect seen constitution-making by YouGov poll, in the sense that one poll showing a majority supporting yes and a group of others on the same weekend last year showing a neck-and-neck race prompted a very short-term, tactical, reactive and piecemeal response that has opened up a new phase in the constitutional journey, now with very clear spillovers that were not thought through in the debate about what on earth to do with England. That, frankly, is no way to run a constitution, but it has become a pattern, and no part of the UK's central political institutions has shown the capacity to give sustained thought to UK-wide coherence and to stand back from the short-term reactions and think in the round. Unless something is done to disrupt that, I see the likelihood that we will continue with short-term tactical responses with no particular end destination in mind.

Professor Jim Gallagher: I agree with some of that. I agree in particular that the strategic UK response on the territorial constitution has been lacking and that the UK's approach has been, if not tactical, then certainly reactive: that is, change happens—let us be blunt—when something happens in Scotland, and Northern Ireland marches to its own tune somewhere else. Typically, Wales is dragged along in the Scottish slipstream to the extent that it wants to be. So I agree with Charlie that reactivity is a problem. Part of the answer to that problem is to look at it through the lens of what sort of United Kingdom we are seeking to create, particularly what its territorial constitution is—to use the phrase that Charlie used, which I strongly favour—and how that relates to the rest of its constitution.

Other

Lords Oral Question - Nepal

Tue, 27 October 2015 |

Baroness Northover (LD): My Lords, I start by thanking **Oxford University** for translating the Nepalese constitution for me. Is the noble Baroness as pleased as I am to see gender rights and—for the first time in the region, as I understand it—LGBT rights enshrined in the constitution? Will the UK Government congratulate the Nepalese Government on this major step forward in human rights?