

Get the latest business news

Shares rally despite retail woe ... Oil prices sends US stocks plunging ... C

TIMESONLINE

TIMES ONLINE

PRINT THIS ARTICLE



CLICK HERE TO PRINT

CLOSE WINDOW

November 19, 2004

Demand for legitimacy in a reformed House of Lords

FROM MR BILLY BRAGG

Sir, I think Peter Riddell (Comment, November 11) is wrong to characterise as "unworkable" my "secondary mandate" option of indirect election of most members of the House of Lords. Although it may not be to his taste, it is a thoroughly viable method of reforming the Lords, particularly as, unlike direct election, it guarantees the primacy of the Commons.

Riddell asserts that it is "weird" to elect both chambers with a single vote, when surely the weird thing is the fact that, in the 21st century, we elect only half of our legislature.

He argues that candidate lists are undemocratic as they are determined by party activists, but this will be just as true of the lists used by those advocating direct election.

He is right to point out that the secondary mandate could have an effect on the recent growth in tactical voting, but I am inclined to believe that a sophisticated electorate that is capable of voting against its own loyalties in order to unseat an incumbent MP will be able to factor in the added dimension of representation in the second chamber.

A House of Lords which is directly elected would result in members having constituency responsibilities which challenge the traditional role of MPs. Do we want a reformed second chamber that has a secondary mandate to scrutinise legislation or one which, by its very nature, is a constant rival to the Commons?

Yours faithfully,
BILLY BRAGG,
6b Bravington Road, W9 3AH.
billybragg@secondarymandate.org
November 15.

From Mr William Wyndham

Sir, It is not in the public's (or Parliament's) interest for the prime minister and his ruling party to run a House of Commons unsupported by a legitimate (that means a mainly directly elected) second chamber. Events move too fast nowadays for the later sanction of a general election to be able to protect Britain from bad government.

Avoiding deadlock between the two Houses is not our first priority. Breaking the deadlock in Lords reform is more urgent, if only to

WANTED

WE has 2 positions. positioning, data-entry, Macintosh preferred. Full benefits. No beneficiary req. to: 770-555-1234

Vintage,
full-bodied type
seeks dish to
accompany
Love may be
on the menu

Co. in WE has 2 positions. accounting, data-entry, Macintosh preferred. Full benefits. No beneficiary req. to: 770-555-1234

Print/Mail Co. in WE has General Accounting, data entry or WSS exp. preferred. Fax resume w/ salary req.

Print/Mail Co. in Mail Co. General Accounting Account or WSS exp. preferred. Fax resume w/ salary req.

Co. in WE has 2 positions.

ensure that the two Houses can work not against each other, but together. A standing joint committee on security and foreign affairs would have uncovered in time the weak case for the Iraq war.

A second chamber, supported by the public, that specialised in regular and painstaking research and debate should be a welcome lieutenant to a Commons intent on its primary duty of controlling the government.

Yours faithfully,
WILLIAM WYNDHAM,
Castlegate House,
Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1YT.
November 15.

Copyright 2005 Times Newspapers Ltd.

This service is provided on Times Newspapers' **standard Terms and Conditions** . Please read our **Privacy Policy** . To inquire about a licence to reproduce material from The Times, visit the **Syndication website** .