

Starting Campaigns Can Be Lonely

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The Leaseholder Ground Rents Bill passed the House of Commons on Monday. During the final debate, just one MP spoke for professional landlords and their ground rents. We had built near unanimity. It was different during the past twenty years. We mistakenly thought in 2002 that parliament had reformed the working of the ancient laws on leasehold. Wrong: the new law did not work. A succession of housing ministers were not more action was needed urgently.

A few of us went into battle. Not much of a battle, you might think, because no one came to the fight: we were ignored. Slowly, gradually the forces for change grew until we became the overwhelming minority.

Decades ago, campaigning for early years education felt lonely. My early work included chairing the Church of England Children's Society and founding the Family Forum, both focusing on the importance of early learning before it had become a mainstream campaign.

Throughout the last month, my team and I have focused on hearing from parents and early years education providers about the concerns and priorities we share ahead of Childcare and Early Education Week, which started on Monday.

On Tuesday I chaired the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Childcare and Early Education on the theme 'We are educators', focusing on the integral work early years professionals do with our children and parents. Policymakers must support them.

Many have concerns with the level of funding, recruitment, regulatory pressures and inadequate levels of support to address the impact of Covid-19 and subsequent lockdowns on the development of young children.

This week too, several MPs and I met a minister about possible legislation to ban so-called 'conversion therapy'. I said they could ban criminal practices, not beneficial therapy. If you have an interest, you have until Friday week 4 February to give your view,. Search the terms Banning Conversion Therapy.

When I give my answers, I shall argue no new law is needed for registered professionals such as doctors.

This has followed a prolonged desire to reconcile the serious concerns of women and safe spaces such as refuges and prisons with the necessary desire for recognition and safety for trans people.

This week, I engaged with fire cladding groups and the Norwegian government investment management ethics experts about shareholdings in companies associated with unsuitable cladding and other building techniques that left innocent leaseholders feeling unsafe in homes they cannot sell at a fair price.

In the constituency while the Chatsmore Farm development appeal inquiry came to its second week, we must also review government's unrealistic expectations for new housebuilding in the area as a whole. I support Councillor Kevin Jenkins's challenge to ministers.

I also visited different constituents facing nuisances from traffic or the activities of neighbours.

On Thursday, we have the Holocaust debate. As Father of the House I join Mr Speaker at the Parliamentary Remembrance gathering. The annual event is a day of remembrance, learning and hope with the repeated theme of bringing light to the darkness. In doing so, we eradicate ignorance and intolerance.

Roosevelt, Churchill, Attlee and many others faced Hitlerism, the mixture of aggression, hatred and genocide.

Those who first faced Hitler in his country and from outside were few in number. Even here in Britain, Parliament was split between appeasement or responding with force. Later, Britain and the Commonwealth appeared almost alone, until the German attack on the USSR and the Japanese assault on the United States navy at Pearl Harbour.

When I join a lonely constituent's battle, we appreciate that the concerns voiced by the few may be shared by many others, at once or later.