

Voting to Help the World's Poorest

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

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The argument that charity begins and ends at home does not convince some people I respect most. The story of the Jericho road was not about the richest or the most learned helping the victim of mugging. The least regarded gave practical help, gave money to the innkeeper and was trusted to return to pay extra if necessary.

I regret not being on the side with most votes on Tuesday. The savings to people in the United Kingdom are the interest on the withdrawn aid: say one hundredth of less than one percent of our national income.

Life includes losing. I would never have been a captain of the House of Commons football team if we had to win every time. We never lost an international in my time; we never beat the press team. I stand with the young England players and I would kneel with them. Heroes, every one.

It is unsatisfactory to me to have the obligations of an Act of Parliament set aside by a short notice debate in one of the Houses of Parliament.

Some never supported official aid programmes. We do not have to agree on everything. Like other candidates, I ask for support at each election to be able to contribute to debate, to vote and to do all I can to create a good or at least an improving society.

The tasks are to reduce avoidable disadvantage, distress and handicap, while improving wellbeing, a mix of wealth and welfare. How can we avoid unnecessary international wars and escape intense persistent civil wars?

Then think how we have gained by public health measures, starting with clean water and effective main drains. That is why we are shocked by the past actions of Southern Water deliberately letting untreated effluent into our rivers and coastal waters.

Now we gain by programmes of vaccination, eliminating smallpox, fighting polio, tackling MMR, reducing cervical cancer, and now miraculously combatting the ravages of Covid 19 by jabs that were not contemplated two years ago.

When I listen to pupils in school and engage with college students, it is taken for granted that females and males have equal opportunity. Most women and girls have the choice not to be married when teenagers. They can expect to decide when to have children and how many to bring into the world.

With more effective working democracies, we would not see continuing popularity of national leaders who fail to improve or to maintain life and prosperity in their countries. I weep at the disorder in South Africa, linked by some to Jacob Zuma's confrontation with justice. I was shocked in January by the encouragement to the mobs who stormed Congress.

We should not think we are immune: think of the small number who pushed past barriers, police and security staff at the Wembley European final.

I do not always believe that everyone thinks or acts in the same ways, and I know I am wrong at times. Politics can often rightly lead to compromise. About twenty colleagues who thought like me on aid were peeled off by the whips. More positively, I can go on making the case that life and lives around the world matter and that they matter for us.

Within the constituency, Tesco at Durrington helpfully made possible a good advice session. People came forward with a range of views and a variety of problems to discuss with councillors and my caring team.