

Lasting Issues in the Last Week of this Parliament

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Let us hope that the new Parliament lasts longer, though I fear that we may take a time to settle into a degree of stability and agreement.

During the last day in the Commons, I heard the statement on the dilemmas faced by some customers of Thomas Cook. I sympathise with the staff too. We were told that the directors of the firm had failed to insure or to put money safe for compensation for people who had proper claims for life-changing injuries or loss-of-life.

Before many MPs made their valedictory speeches, the House came together to pass all stages of the Historical Institutional Abuse (Northern Ireland) Bill. See the website hiainquiry.org for the background. For 73 years, a succession of vulnerable children suffered abuse, sexual and in other ways. Sir Anthony Hart's report was the first. Other parts of the UK will follow.

There are no MPs from tonight. I hope to be re-elected because there are many campaigns we have not yet won. Regularly in my occasional columns in the Littlehampton Gazette and the Worthing Herald I make clear that much of my work is with MPs in other parties to overcome ignorance or apathy about issues where change is needed to make lives better.

Cross-party cooperation has won compensation and recognition for the abuse survivors in Northern Ireland. Similar partnerships won the battle against high stakes Fixed Odds Betting Terminals, and it is helping to win the campaign on leasehold reforms.

This coming week sees the Remembrance Services and the Festival of Remembrance. As a member of the public and as a member of the Royal British Legion, I shall lay wreaths and I shall remember – the people in my family, the people who have no family to remember them and the steadfast duty of those who serve today in our armed forces, together with the cadets and the volunteers who help them.

I am now the Conservative MP with the longest continuous service (theoretically because the great Kenneth Clarke retires without the party Whip). The longest serving Labour MP is twelve years older than me. If he fails to come back, I may sit in the Clerk's chair for the expected re-election of Sir Lindsay Hoyle, the great new Speaker.

During the general election, I hope to meet many readers. I want to thank everyone who by help, kindness and encouragement have made my parliamentary service effective for so many who have needed advice and assistance.

For updates during the election see www.sirpeterbottomley.com