

## Compassion, Realism and Radicalism

*Sir Peter Bottomley MP*

*Worthing Herald Article*

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There has not been a dull week during my life serving as Member of Parliament. The past days remind me of the shared joys and the shared sorrows in the lives of our shared communities and families.

On Friday during the public advice session in the Guildbourne Centre, a long-married couple cheered me. Over the years we have tackled a series of serious problems successfully. My feeling that day must be what nurses and doctors feel when a patient is restored to health.

Dame Sarah Mullally was the NHS chief nurse. Now Bishop of London, she addressed Tuesday's National Prayer breakfast in the Great Hall at Westminster. I hope her words will be on the Diocesan website.

Later that day, Adair Turner (with Sarah in the House of Lords) spoke to the Environmental Network on the amazing progress and the improved prospects of decarbonising our economy and the likelihood that most of the rest of the world will too, without raising costs. Look at the results of a web search with the words Adair Turner Committee on Climate Change.

As a life member of the Woodlands Trust, I know the value of the way trees take carbon from the atmosphere, year after year. When a transport minister I was responsible for planting more saplings each year than any other body. This Wednesday I contributed briefly to the debate on protecting and promoting red squirrels. They run around in the Isle of Wight. On the mainland, they need protecting from the greys who carry the pox that does not harm them but does kill the reds. They cannot coexist.

Thank you, many of you, for supporting my common sense remarks on Climate Change and my colleague Mark Field who prevented an intruder approaching the Chancellor and the Governor of the Bank of England. A few have written to disagree. It is the issue on which I have had the most approval.

On Monday, I contributed to the discussion on the long-term development of our National Health Service. It is 100 years since the eminent doctor Christopher Addison, then a Liberal, became the first Health Minister; it is nearly 20 years since Virginia first became a health minister. For the record, it is 72 years since my father worked as a civil servant in the Dominions Office for Viscount Addison as he had become. Addison was responsible for the initial creation of council homes for heroes and their families. Often I wish some MPs knew more of the achievements of the great people who came before us.

When I show visitors around the Palace of Westminster, I talk of Eleanor Rathbone MP. Her family motto was that if something needed to be done, it could be done. She helped bring threatened Jewish children away from the Nazi threat. After decades of being blocked, in three hours just before the 1945 general election she gained the legislation to introduce family allowances for all children after the first. My first political campaign was to gain the allowance for first children too.

Also on Monday in the debate on official overseas aid, I held 70 pence in one hand and ten £10 notes in the other. I hope the vast majority of constituents agree that we can afford and should give that fraction to changing lives around the world. It is more than a duty to meet the United Nations target: it is in our own long-term interest too.