



Craig Whittaker MP

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Selection of MPs for Parliamentary Committees (Committee of Selection)

Thank you for contacting me about the procedure for nominating MPs for Commons committees.

Appointments to Select Committees are made through motions put before the House of Commons, while appointments to general committees (such as Public Bill Committees) are made by the Committee's own authority. This means that the Committee of Selection appoints Members to the Public Bill Committees. The motion in the name of the Leader of the House would ensure that the Government would have a majority of one on odd number committees and parity with the opposition on even numbered committees.

The Government, through the agreement with the DUP, has a working majority in the House of Commons. It is not right, therefore, that the opposition parties should have a majority on the Committee of Selection and be able to block or frustrate Government business. Moreover, the Conservative Party has 55 more seats than Labour; it is illogical that these two parties should have the same number of seats on the Committee of Selection.

Writing in the New Statesman, Stephen Bush notes, *"If the Government has the votes in the Commons to grant itself a majority on select committees, it's hard to argue it doesn't have the **right** to a majority."*

There is precedent for the arrangement being proposed by the Leader of the House: in 1976, a motion brought by the Labour Chief Whip ensured that the minority Labour Government had a majority on the Committee of Selection.

The motion in the name of the Leader of the House, Andrea Leadsom, will be debated on the floor of the house on a Tuesday. In contrast, the Labour motion of 1976 went through without a vote at the end of a sitting Friday.

If passed, the motion will ensure that Standing Committees reflect the composition of the House. The SNP and the Labour Party do not have a majority of seats over the Conservative Party. The number of Conservative Seats (317) is greater than that of the SNP and Labour combined (297). If the committee was to remain in the current form, the SNP and Labour would have a majority over the Conservatives.

There will be plenty of opportunity during the current Parliament, away from committees, to scrutinise and amend the Government's legislative programme.

Specifically on the issue of Brexit legislation, the Government has been open to increased scrutiny of Brexit Bills. The EU Withdrawal Bill will spend 8 days in Committee of the Whole House with further days allocated for Report Stage and Third Reading.

Affirmative procedure is a type of parliamentary procedure that applies to some Statutory Instruments (SIs). An SI that is laid subject to affirmative procedure requires the formal approval of both Houses of Parliament before it becomes law.

As well as the EU (Withdrawal) Bill, there will be other Brexit Bills brought forward in due course which the House will also be able to scrutinise and debate in the usual ways.

The Leader of the House, Andrea Leadsom has told HuffPost UK, “These proposals create the fairest balance between the Opposition and Government, and will ensure technical, procedural rules do not cause unwarranted delays to the business of Parliament. The adjustments provide for maximum scrutiny with minimum disruption and delay, both to parliamentary proceedings and to the governance of the country.”

Thank you again for contacting me.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Whittaker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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