



Andrew Dismore

Member of Parliament for Hendon

Constituency Report #4 23rd March 2006- 22nd May 2006

This report covers two months, from 23rd March to the 22nd May 2006. I have unusually decided to cover two months in one report, as this period covered the recess when Parliament was not sitting, and the local election campaign period.

House of Commons and Westminster

In Report No. 3 I said I would refer to the **Budget**, which now seems some time ago! Some of the headline announcements include an extra £585 million over two years for direct support to schools; free off peak national bus travel for every pensioner from April 2008; more support for families by increasing the child element of the child tax credit in line with earnings, to the end of the Parliament; support for talented British athletes to prepare for the Olympics; additional measures to tackle climate change; further payments into the Child Trust Fund for children aged seven; an extra £100 million to bring forward the recruitment of police community support officers; measures to raise productivity; increases in the starting threshold of stamp duty to help first time buyers and increases in the inheritance tax threshold. The economic forecast also shows the UK economy to be stable and growing, and that the Government was meeting its strict fiscal rules for sound public finances over the economic cycle.

In relation to my own efforts in the House, I spoke during **Health questions**, raising the issue of our **Primary Care Trust's** financial position, and in particular to ensure that money that has been borrowed from the Trust this year will be paid back in future years, [click here for more details](#). I also raised a **Prime Minister's Question** over **environmental issues**. [Click here for PMQ's](#). I responded to the **Home Secretary's** statement on the **7th July bombings** [click here for my press release](#). I spoke in debates on housing, [click here for Hansard](#), and **small compensation claims**, [click here for Hansard](#).

The Defence Minister made a statement expanding the **compensation scheme for former civilian internees** of the Japanese, a campaign I have been working on for several years. This was a major step forward, the campaign is now drawing to a successful close, and I was able to respond in the House to the Minister's statement. [Click here for Hansard](#). I also raised the issue during Defence question time. [Click here to read my press release on the subject](#).

In terms of Private Members Bills, my own Bill, the **Pharmaceutical Labelling Bill**, which would provide for much clearer and safer labelling, was due to be heard in the House for its Second Reading on the 12th May. Unfortunately, it was blocked by Conservatives, who spoke at length in the previous debate, attempting to frustrate it. Nevertheless, I had negotiations with the Health Minister, and received assurances that the Government is concerned about the issue and is consulting on my suggestions. The Bill also attracted the support of the RAC as well as a large number of other health and pharmaceutical organisations.

There is also news to report about the **Emergency Workers (Obstruction) Bill**, of which I am one of the sponsors. I sat on the standing committee of this Bill, which was completed very

quickly, and the Bill has now completed its report stage. It will come back in a few weeks' time for hopefully its Third Reading, and then proceed to the Lords.

The **Joint Committee on Human Rights**, of which I am Chair, has published two reports, which may be of interest: one on the **Education and Inspections Bill**, and another on the **Legislative and Regulatory Reform Bill**, particularly raising concerns from a human rights perspective. I am in negotiations with Ministers over further improvements to this Bill. [Click here for the JCHR web site.](#)

We have just embarked on a new inquiry on the issue of **people trafficking**.

I have started a campaign on the **Compensation Bill**, which in my view has a number of unwelcome measures which are likely to reduce the ability of accident victims to recover compensation. I have met the Lord Chancellor to discuss those reservations.

I have sponsored and signed the usual wide range of **Early Day Motions**, to see them [click here](#).

To see my written **Parliamentary questions** see the bottom of this email for instructions on how to use the [Parliamentary Search Engine](#), which you can use to see them all, or just those that you have a particular interest in.

Finally, I do not think it would be fair to complete a report on what is going on in Westminster without reference to some of the **difficulties facing the Labour Government** at present.

There is no doubt that that is has been a difficult time for us, around the time of the local elections. The problems facing the then Home Secretary over the release of foreign prisoners was a matter of great concern. I think it was inevitable that Charles Clarke would have to leave the Government, though generally I think he has been a very enlightened and competent Home Secretary and his overall contribution, I believe, will be missed.

As for the NHS, I believe that the press has been extremely unfair. I have checked the position with our local NHS hospitals. The reports of NHS job losses, which have caused such fear and anxiety, simply do not check out. For Barnet and Chase Farm and Royal Free Trusts, where hundreds of jobs are said to be going, the real picture is that unfilled posts, some vacant for years, are being deleted, and expensive temporary agency arrangements are being replaced by permanent staff, who are less costly, more efficient, and of course far better for patient care. There are no mass redundancies.

Comparing notes with colleagues around the country, whilst this experience is not universal, it is generally what appears to be going on. Basically the NHS is becoming better managed.

The Deputy Prime Minister's position is, in my view, a most unfortunate one. His personal life is a matter for him, but I fully understand the criticisms that have been advanced. Whilst he continues to fulfil an important role as Deputy Prime Minister, with a wide brief, his department has been reorganised. In my view it would be appropriate for his fringe benefits to be reduced to reflect this, and I agree with the criticisms that have been advanced in this respect.

Issues have also arisen over party funding, and I have met the Minister responsible for this at the Department for Constitutional Affairs to discuss possible alternative ways that political parties could be funded in the future, to create better transparency yet at the same time allow the political process to function.

As for the future of the Prime Minister, I believe that he still has much to offer, and whilst it would be appropriate for him to leave at some stage during this Parliament, it would not be in the country's best interest to name a date. As for the succession, obviously Gordon Brown

is the front runner, but there are procedures in the Labour Party for the choice of new leader, which allows other candidates to put themselves forward.

Other issues I have dealt with in Parliament include attending a seminar on the up to date position on the risk of **asbestos**; I have attended various meetings organised by **Labour Friends of Israel**, **Friends of Cyprus** and have chaired **Fire Brigades Union Group** meetings.

I attended a seminar at the **LSE** over the growth of the **far-right** in London.

I continued the campaign with the **Chinese community** over various immigration rules which impact on them unfairly.

I met with the **Royal British Legion**; the **London NHS Confederation**, the organisation representing the NHS generally in London to get an update; the new company managing **Thameslink**, to hear about their plans to improve the line with particular reference to Mill Hill Broadway and Hendon stations; **London Underground** to discuss the problems on the Northern Line; **London First**, the organisation representing major London businesses, to discuss the Olympics transport issues and the powers of the London Mayor.

I attended the **India All Party Group**, and the '**Tiffin Club**', a charity group organised by MPs particularly to support Indian good causes, organised around curry dinners!

The **Archaeology All Party Group** had a very interesting meeting with United States Colonel Bogdanos, over the looting of treasures from museums in Iraq. He is a reservist Marine Colonel, whose normal job is as a senior member of the District Attorney's office in New York. He gave a very accurate picture of what was going on, the problems caused by illegal activities in the international arts and antiques market, what treasures have been recovered and what treasures had already been looted by Saddam long before the war. The Baghdad Museum's nickname amongst Iraqis was 'Saddam's Gift Shop'. He has written a book, the proceeds of which are going to charities supporting Iraqi museums.

Finally, on a more social note, I attended the reception organised by the **All Party Cricket Group** for England players, the England women's team and the Sri Lankan team at the House of Commons.

I also had three photographs accepted for the House of Commons **photography exhibition**. They can be viewed on my website, [just click here!](#)

The Recess Period

I used part of the recess period to visit Nigeria as a member of a delegation from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. We had the opportunity of visiting Abuja where we met senior politicians, northern Nigeria, and Lagos. There was no time for sightseeing, given our packed meeting schedule, but we got a feel for the country. We saw at first hand the very serious challenges to democracy in that country, the problems caused by corruption, and the need for external support for democratic institutions and to help tackle corruption.

The people of Nigeria were extremely friendly and welcoming, and are ill served by many of their institutions.

The remainder of the recess period was taken up with campaigning for the local elections!

Constituency

The most important development was the local elections for the London Borough of Barnet. These were not as bad as many had predicted for the Labour Party, but could have been better. The Conservative Party remain in control of the Council, and with the 'coup'

engineered within six days of the election to depose the former leader of Barnet Council Conservative Party and to choose a new one, whose reputation is one of the right. We have to be very concerned about the future of public services in our area.

I met Averil Dongworth, the **Chief Executive of Barnet and Chase Farm NHS Trust**, to discuss the financial position and future plans there.

I have launched a campaign to try and prevent the franchising of **Burnt Oak Post Office**: Post Office Ltd had not even bothered to notify me of this, technically because it is just over the border in Harrow East constituency, but the vast bulk of customers actually come from my side of the 'frontier'. To take part in this campaign, and see the others I run please [click here](#).

I held a tea party at **St. Matthias Church, Colindale**, for local residents and visited **Rosh Pinah Primary School** and spoke at their assembly. I also spoke at **Hammerson House**, a sheltered accommodation.

I attended the Israeli Embassy concert for the **350th anniversary of Jewish people** in the United Kingdom.

Finally, I should refer to the terrible knife attack which led to the death of an innocent, hardworking and popular student outside the London Academy in Edgware. I was in close contact with the police and attended their briefing meeting, until the prime suspect was caught. He has now been charged and made his first appearance in court. I also immediately visited the school and offered my assistance to the bereaved family. As the case is now 'sub-judice' I cannot comment on the detail of the case, but I shall be raising the wider issues in Parliament. Further reports will follow.

Media

I continue to have national appearances in the media. I spoke on the Radio 4 Today programme on issues in the Middle East; Radio 4 World at One, on the deportation of extremists from the UK; I was quoted in the Guardian and appeared on LBC over the high costs of senior barristers to the legal aid fund; and I also was quoted in the Daily Express over the issue of fundamentalist extremists. I appeared on the Radio 4 and BBC television news, commenting on the appalling knife attack outside the London Academy.


My website contains press releases I have issued over the period, and these contain much more detailed information than is set out in this report, so if you wish to see more of what I have been up to, you can access details, there! The full range of press releases to the local and specialist press can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

I would be very interested to hear any feedback on the issues raised in this report. I am also considering starting a series of occasional meetings for constituents, probably on Sunday afternoons, to receive feedback, both from these reports and more generally on what is going on in and around the constituency. Please let me know if you would like to have invitations to such events, which will be held at my constituency office next to the Town Hall in Hendon. To register your interest just [click here](#).

I hope that you have found this report of interest, and if you would like to receive my specific subject based reports just [click here](#). If you have any comments, please do not hesitate to let me know by emailing me at updates@hendonlabourparty.com.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Dismore
Member of Parliament for Hendon

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