

Chapter 18 – Titles and name

18.1 Our task is to make recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the second chamber as a part of our national Parliament. Would the recommendations made earlier in this report be supported or undermined if the automatic link between the peerage and membership of the second chamber were broken or if the name of the second chamber and the titles by which its members are known were changed?



Links with the peerage

18.2 Our recommendations envisage a chamber of appointed and regional members, all serving terms of three electoral cycles or 15 years. They will all be chosen on the basis of the contribution they can make to the second chamber, not as a reward or mark of approval for past achievements.

18.3 This contrasts strongly with the perceptions associated with peerages. While many peerages, particularly life peerages, have been awarded to so-called ‘working peers’ in the expectation that they will contribute to the work of the present House of Lords (normally on behalf of one of the main political parties), they are also often seen as a recognition of past service and merit. Many life peers treat their peerages as essentially honorary and do not acknowledge any associated public service obligation to participate in the work of the second chamber. The perception that peerages are honours is reinforced by the fact that, like other honours, they are awarded by the Crown and for life.

18.4 It is already the case that most hereditary peers are no longer members of the second chamber.¹ It would be anachronistic and confusing to perpetuate

the automatic link between membership of the second chamber and the possession of a peerage. This would be particularly true if some members of the second chamber were to be directly elected, as proposed in Models B and C (Chapter 12). Also, receiving a lifelong honour as a prior requirement for fixed-term membership of the second chamber would, in itself, be inconsistent. We therefore recommend that the automatic link between the peerage and membership of the second chamber should be broken.

¹ Irish peers and, before 1963, some Scottish peers were not able to sit and vote in the House of Lords, but they were relatively few in number.

18.5 New members of the reformed second chamber will enter through appointment by the independent Appointments Commission, whether by virtue of selection as a regional member or by the Appointments Commission itself, or by virtue of appointment as a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary or as a representative of the Church of England. Possession of a peerage should no longer be a necessary qualification for membership of the second chamber, and new members should not be offered a peerage in that connection.

18.6 The future of the peerage itself is not a matter on which we need express a view. However, we would expect that it would remain open to the Prime Minister to recommend award of a peerage in recognition of a person's merit and achievements. Possession of a peerage should not be a bar to membership of the reformed second chamber and members of the chamber should not be precluded from accepting peerages; but the two should be completely distinct.

Recommendation 127: Possession of a peerage should no longer be a necessary qualification for membership of the second chamber, and new members should not be offered a peerage in that connection.

Titles of members

18.7 The decision to sever the automatic link between the peerage and membership of the chamber means that a new title for members will be required. This is not a central issue, but the title adopted will symbolise the nature and style of the new institution and its members.

18.8 Some have suggested that members of the reformed second chamber should adopt the suffix LP (Lord/Lady of Parliament) and the courtesy title 'Lord/Lady'. This option would signal and symbolise the elements of continuity from the present House of Lords, which we believe should be sustained. It would also reflect the fact that for at least the first few years of its existence, until new members came to outnumber the remaining life peers, the reformed second chamber would continue to have a majority of Lords (and Ladies) among its members. There would be no need to change the name of the chamber and many of the formal usages could be left unaltered. While there



might be a risk of confusion with the title ‘Lord of Parliament’ held by Church of England bishops and some members of the Scottish peerage, the numbers involved are sufficiently small as to suggest this would be a minor issue.

18.9 Others have proposed that a fresh chamber needs a fresh start. A change of title could clarify the changed nature of entry to the reformed second chamber and its separation from the peerage. They suggest that there would be a considerable risk of confusion between the Lords/Ladies of Parliament who were members of the second chamber but not peers, the Lords/Ladies who were peers but not members of the second chamber and, potentially, the Lords/Ladies who were peers and might be elected to the House of Commons. Alternative titles would be ‘State Counsellor’ and ‘Senator’/‘Senator of Parliament’. The former has little to commend it and could easily be confused with local government ‘councillor’. By contrast, ‘Senator’ has the great advantage of being generally understood as referring to a member of a country’s second chamber.



Name of the chamber

18.10 Should members of the second chamber be known as Lords/Ladies of Parliament, this would allow many of the traditions and usages of the current House of Lords to continue and would not require any change in the name of the chamber. A change would be required, however, if members of the reformed second chamber were to receive the title Senator/Senator of Parliament. In this country, we are accustomed to our two national legislative chambers being ‘Houses’ of Parliament. This would imply that the reformed second chamber should be known as the House of Senators.

Conclusion

18.11 These issues are not central to the successful reform of the second chamber and there are arguments in favour of each of the options canvassed above. We consider that the situation should be left to evolve. Parliament should determine whether, in time, the reformed second chamber should be called something other than the House of Lords and its members given a new title.

Recommendation 128: The question of the name of the second chamber and the titles of its members should be left to evolve.