

## **The Public Bill Committee**

*A new legislative stage for accountability and questioning!*

So you've abolished the Lords, oh no! You now have no further adequate lever for accountability and scrutiny beyond simply the existing Commons procedures. This is no way to run a democracy!

Here's the big idea then, let's have a new extra bonus stage as a little reward. During a Second Reading, someone may say "hey, I wanna hold this Government to account, but I am asking questions on the debate and they can just laugh and reply 'rubbish'". Well boy do I have a surprise.

### How does a Bill go to Committee?

During a Second Reading Debate, the following can occur on Government legislation:

- 1 MP comments "Deputy Speaker, I would like to refer this Bill to the Public Bill Committee"
- If 3 other MPs second this Motion, then the Bill moves to the Committee Stage!

The Bill now moves to the Public Bill Committee, this is composed of everyone in MHOC, not just MPs!

The Public Bill Committee will hold a Hearing which would be on Reddit as "B1001 - Telecommunications Nationalisation Bill - Public Bill Committee" for example.

### What is the Committee?

The Committee will now be in session!

There will be a Hearing, in which anyone can ask a question and expect an answer. The individual being questioned will be either, in descending order:

- The Minister responsible for the Bill; or
- The Minister who has the ministerial position for the area which the Bill covers; or
- The author of the Bill; or
- A nominated Government representative.

The number of initial questions is proposed as:

- Shadow Cabinet Minister for responsible area: 6

- Opposition Spokesperson for responsible area: 3
- Everyone else: 2

However, everyone would be allowed as many follow-ups as they would like, as well as the ability to ask follow-up questions under answers to other people's questions.

The Public Bill Committee shall sit for 6 days, with 4 days of initial questions.

There will also be the ability during the entire 6 days to make amendments to the Bill as a reply to the AutoModerator comment.

## What's next?

After the Public Bill Committee stage ends, the Bill then moves to an AmCom division if necessary, then a Third Reading, so that debate can further occur with all the new information everyone has.

The Bill then continues onto a Final Division as per normal.

## In practice

The Budget is the perfect example of where this can be utilised to the Opposition's advantage, giving everyone the prime opportunity to grill the Chancellor on the Government's spending in a quasi-Finance MQs. It also gives more time for these big Bills to be read through properly and debated.

However, I believe Speakership would have final discretion as to allow a Public Bill Committee stage on any given legislation, as it should be used wisely as a lever to hold the Government to account, and delay legislation. Giving the entire Opposition a golden bargaining chip to threaten to slow down Government business if they so choose, and encourages the Government to work more constructively on key controversial legislation so that they can avoid dealing with pesky MQs and delaying their Bills.

## Final Comments

I understand many of us, myself included, want to keep the Lords. Sadly this looks like a forgone conclusion for the time being. As such, I think it is vital we think of new ways to have accountability and scrutiny of Government legislation, and that is why I have come up with this proposal, so I do hope you will join me in supporting it!

Much love, Connor