Thank you very much for giving Committee Chairmen a chance to appear before your Committee last week.

I am writing now to confirm and amplify some of the points I mentioned at the meeting but also to bring to your attention some other issues which time prevented me raising then.

1) Structure
In my view, 'Ad hoc' (possibly in future to be called 'Special' !) Committees march to the beat of a different drum to Post Legislative 'Scrutiny' (possibly in future to be called Post Legislative 'Investigative'!) Committees.

The former need a full session to gather the required evidence and prepare a Report but the latter do not necessarily require as long. I am currently a member of the committee undertaking the Post Legislative Scrutiny of the Bribery Act - in my view, there are a handful of key points to be reviewed and a limited number of interested parties to be consulted. We could, therefore in my view, be done and dusted by Christmas.

It follows that the Post Legislative Scrutiny Committee could usefully be a permanent committee - with its reviews of individual Acts being of varying length and its membership changing in line with the practice of the other permanent committee. The specific Acts to be investigated would be determined by the usual channels.

2) Selection of Topics for Ad Hoc Committees
As at present all members of the House would be invited to send in topics. The Liaison Committee would conduct a first sift. It would be empowered to rule out topics for a range of reasons (e.g. duplication of work going on in the House of Commons, having been recently examined etc) but would give their reasons publicly.

The winners from the resulting reduced list would be chosen by a ballot of all members of the House.

3) Other Changes as regards Topics
Those who propose a topic which is chosen should be able to serve on the Committee – but not chair it.
Topics should be focussed to increase impact.

Every school which has been the subject of a visit as part of the Lord's Speakers Outreach Programme should be asked if they would like to submit a topic for a Special Committee to consider.

4) **Evidence to Committee**
Greater effort needs to be taken to reach past 'the usual suspects' when seeking people to give evidence to Committees. Well established London based sources are fine but there is a world outside the M25 even if it can be challenging to access it!!

5) **Ad Hoc Reports follow up**
Too often one can see the relief on the Minister's face as he/she comes to the end of a reply speech on a debate on an Ad hoc Committee Report - the finishing tape has been reached! - so some formal further follow up would be very worthwhile.

To achieve this will require the setting up of some organisational framework - it is unrealistic to think that individual committee chairman can be effective on a case by case basis.

So I would argue for the establishment of a new subcommittee ('The Monitoring Committee') of the Liaison Committee. It would be tasked with following up progress, (or lack of it), on Government commitments/suggestions given in responses to Committee Reports. It would produce a quarterly/six monthly report to the whole House outlining success and failures.

It would work in conjunction with the relevant Committee Chairman. Its monitoring of Government responses to individual committee reports would continue until it was agreed that there was no practical value in further monitoring. In extremis it would have the power to recall the relevant Committee and require Ministers to explain their actions or inactions to the Committee. At a lower level, it would work with the relevant Committee Chairman to agree a programme of prodding the Government by means of PQ's, QSD's etc.
Finally, I know that your Committee is very busy so I hope you will forgive me if I respectfully suggest that hearing seven witnesses simultaneously inevitably leads to a rather 'bitty' discussion- perhaps a maximum of four witnesses at a time would provide a more useful result for your Committee.

Regards

The Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbots CBE

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