

The Education and Inspections Bill's first day in Report

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The Report stage of the Education and Inspections Bill produced the largest Labour backbench rebellion so far this Parliament when 69 Labour MPs defied their whips to vote for an amendment that would have insisted upon a ballot of parents before a new trust school could be created.

As well as being the largest rebellion so far this Parliament, easily dwarfing the 52 Labour MPs who voted against the Bill's Second Reading on 15 March, it was also the largest Report stage rebellion since Labour came to power in 1997, just beating the 67 Labour MPs who voted against cuts in disability benefit during the Report stage of the Welfare Reform and Pensions Bill in May 1999. And although slightly smaller in absolute terms than the 72 Labour MPs who voted against the Second Reading of the Higher Education Bill in 2004, there were then more Labour MPs in total, and so as a percentage of the parliamentary party the 69 Education and Inspection rebels constitute the largest rebellion over domestic legislation suffered by the Blair government.

However, thanks to the support of the Conservative frontbench, the Government won comfortably, defeating the amendment by 412 votes to 121, a hefty Government majority of 291.

1. Voting on trust school ballots

	For	Against
Labour	69	245
Conservative	0	161
Lib Dem	53	0
DUP	0	8
UUP	1	0
	123	414

Note: Table includes tellers. Neither Richard Taylor nor George Galloway voted in last night's divisions, nor did any of the SNP, SDLP or Plaid Cymru MPs.

As occurred at Second Reading, the Government relied on the support of the Conservatives (or, more accurately, they relied on the Conservatives not voting against them). Had the Conservatives abstained – and assuming all other votes remained constant – the Government would have still won, albeit by a somewhat reduced majority of 130. But had the Conservatives voted against the Bill, the Government would have lost by 284 to 253, a majority against the government of 31.¹ Of course, all other votes would not have remained constant – there would

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¹ Moreover, had the Conservatives been voting against, it is likely that the DUP would have been as well, which would have made the defeat even worse, a majority against of 47.

have been different pressures on Labour MPs if there had been a risk of defeat – but the size of the rebellion was such that it is difficult to believe the Government would have won had the Conservatives voted against them.

The rebels

Most of the 69 Labour MPs to vote against their whip last night have done so before. Fifteen were rebelling for the first time in this Parliament (taking the total number to have done so to 107 since the May 2005 election), but all but one of these 15 had voted against their whip in the previous parliament. The exception, the one MP to lose his rebellion virginity last night, was Jim Devine, Robin Cook's successor in Livingston.

A total of 76 Labour MPs have now voted against the Bill so far, a number likely to increase after today's further round of voting.

Only three of the Labour rebels – Katy Clark, Linda Riordan and Sir Peter Soulsby – came from the 2005 intake of MPs, and all have rebelled against the Government before. Of the 52 Labour MPs who voted against the Bill at Second Reading, 45 voted against their whip again at Report stage. Only one of the remaining seven (Doug Henderson) voted for the Government, whilst the other six either abstained or were absent.² Some 24 Labour MPs voted against the Government at Report, despite either having abstained or reluctantly voted with the Government at Second Reading.

Calculating an exact number of Labour abstainers is (as ever) tricky, but (excluding members of the Government not present last night) if we include those MPs who were not present at all last night but voted against Second Reading, and those who did not vote on the rebel amendment, but voted later in the evening in favour of the Government, then we get the following 14 MPs: Ronnie Campbell; David Clelland; Michael Connarty; Ann Cryer; Alan Keen; Austin Mitchell; Julie Morgan; Albert Owen; Joan Ruddock; Marsha Singh; John Smith; Keith Vaz; Betty Williams; and David Winnick.³

In an earlier paper, we presented a list of 109 Labour MPs from the ranks of whom the rebels were likely to come.⁴ All except four of the 69 rebels did indeed come from that list – the only exceptions being Jim Devine, Andrew Dismore, Rob Marris and Anthony Wright. We also ranked the 109 in order of past rebelliousness, arguing that this was usually a good guide as to the ones to watch. The table below repeats that lists, and marks those who voted against the whip in red with those thought to have abstained marked in yellow. Note the solid block of 30 red names at its head.

² David Clelland and John Smith abstained, and Ronnie Campbell, Michael Connarty, Alan Keen and Austin Mitchell were not present throughout the entire evening's voting.

³ Also not present last night were the following MPs (all except Doug Naysmith have voted against the Government at least once so far this Parliament): Frank Cook; David Hamilton; George Howarth; Doug Naysmith; and Gavin Strang.

⁴ Philip Cowley and Mark Stuart, 'The latter stages of the Education and Inspections Bill: How to judge it – and who to watch', from www.revolt.co.uk.

2. Labour MPs to watch, in descending order of rebelliousness, prior to Report

<i>Name of MP</i>	<i>Signed AWP</i>	<i>Second Reading vote</i>	<i>No of rebellions, 2005-06 (before Report Stage)</i>
McDonnell, John	Yes	X	47
Corbyn, Jeremy	Yes	X	45
Jones, Lynne	Yes	X	37
Wareing, Robert	Yes	X	33
Fisher, Mark	Yes	a	29
Hopkins, Kelvin	Yes	X	29
Marshall-Andrews, Bob	Yes	a	29
Simpson, Alan	Yes	X	29
Short, Clare	Yes	X	28
Jackson, Glenda	Yes	X	26
Gibson, Ian	Yes	X	19
Flynn, Paul	Yes	X	17
Abbott, Diane	Yes	X	16
Clark, Katy	Yes	X	16
Riordan, Linda	Yes	X	16
Taylor, David	Yes	X	15
Dunwoody, Gwyneth	Yes	X	13
Wood, Mike	Yes	X	13
Clapham, Michael	Yes	X	11
Prentice, Gordon	Yes	X	11
Skinner, Dennis	Yes	X	11
Gerrard, Neil	Yes	X	10
Grogan, John	Yes	X	9
Kilfoyle, Peter	No	X	9
Drew, David	Yes	X	7
Mudie, George	No	X	7
Smith, Geraldine	No	X	7
Austin, John	Yes	-	6
Cohen, Harry	Yes	X	6
Dobson, Frank	Yes	X	6
Love, Andy	Yes	G	6
Smith, John	Yes	X	6
Trickett, Jon	Yes	X	6
Meacher, Michael	Yes	X	5
Vis, Rudi	Yes	-	5
Burden, Richard	Yes	G	4
Caton, Martin	Yes	X	4
Challen, Colin	Yes	G	4
Cook, Frank	No	-	4
Cryer, Ann	Yes	a	4
Hamilton, David	No	-	4
Henderson, Doug	No	X	4
Lloyd, Tony	Yes	X	4
Campbell, Ronnie	Yes	X	3

Connarty, Michael	No	X	3
Davidson, Ian	No	X	3
Etherington, Bill	Yes	-	3
Mitchell, Austin	Yes	X	3
Strang, Gavin	No	-	3
Burgon, Colin	Yes	X	2
Cruddas, Jon	Yes	X	2
Efford, Clive	Yes	X	2
Godsiff, Roger	No	-	2
Jones, Helen	Yes	X	2
McCafferty, Chris	Yes	-	2
Morgan, Julie	Yes	-	2
Mullin, Chris	Yes	G	2
Raynsford, Nick	Yes	G	2
Soulsby, Sir Peter	Yes	-	2
Berry, Roger	Yes	G	1
Clelland, David	Yes	X	1
Dobbin, Jim	No	X	1
Farrelly, Paul	No	a	1
Hamilton, Fabian	Yes	X	1
Havard, Dai	Yes	X	1
Heyes, David	Yes	X	1
Humble, Joan	Yes	X	1
Keen, Alan	Yes	X	1
Owen, Albert	Yes	a	1
Purchase, Ken	Yes	X	1
Ruddock, Joan	Yes	G	1
Truswell, Paul	No	X	1
Turner, Desmond	Yes	X	1
Walley, Joan	Yes	X	1
Allen, Graham	Yes	G	0
Anderson, Dave	Yes	G	0
Betts, Clive	Yes	a	0
Chaytor, David	Yes	G	0
Clarke, Tom	No	-	0
Crausby, David	No	a	0
Cummings, John	No	a	0
Dean, Janet	Yes	G	0
Denham, John	Yes	G	0
Eagle, Angela	Yes	G	0
Ellman, Louise	Yes	G	0
Foster, Michael J	Yes	G	0
Francis, Hywel	Yes	G	0
Gilroy, Linda	Yes	G	0
Griffith, Nia	Yes	G	0
Hoyle, Lindsay	No	a	0
Iddon, Brian	Yes	G	0
Illsley, Eric	Yes	a	0
Jones, Kevan	Yes	G	0
Jones, Martyn	Yes	G	0
Lepper, David	Yes	G	0
Mallaber, Judy	Yes	G	0

Murphy, Denis	Yes	G	0
Naysmith, Doug	Yes	G	0
O'Hara, Edward	Yes	G	0
Osborne, Sandra	Yes	G	0
Prosser, Gwyn	Yes	G	0
Robinson, Geoffrey	Yes	G	0
Salter, Martin	Yes	G	0
Seabeck, Alison	Yes	G	0
Stringer, Graham	No	-	0
Todd, Mark	Yes	G	0
Whitehead, Alan	Yes	G	0
Williams, Betty	Yes	-	0
Wyatt, Derek	Yes	G	0

Note: red indicates an MP who voted against the Government at Report;
orange indicates those who abstained.