

Odds and Sods: Tory and Labour Rebellions over Lords amendments

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Wednesday 29 March saw four separate backbench Labour rebellions, along with two Conservative revolts, as MPs debated a series of Lords amendments to the Identity Cards Bill and the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill.

As a result of these rebellions, by the Easter recess 29 per cent of all votes have witnessed Labour rebellions (61 out of 208 divisions), averaging 11 MPs per rebellion.

This very short briefing paper details the rebels and the rebellions.

Immigration Bill

The largest rebellion of the night saw 19 Labour MPs support an amendment to a Lords amendment to the Immigration Bill in the name of Neil Gerrard that would have allowed the Government to retain the option of giving out cash to failed asylum seekers, as well as vouchers for food and accommodation. This was the largest rebellion on the Bill.

The 19 rebels were:

Diane Abbott
Michael Clapham
Harry Cohen
Jeremy Corbyn
Jon Cruddas
David Drew
Mark Fisher
Neil Gerrard
Ian Gibson
Kate Hoey
Glenda Jackson
Lynne Jones
John McDonnell
George Mudie
Clare Short
Alan Simpson
Marsha Singh
Dennis Skinner
Keith Vaz

All but one (Marsha Singh) had rebelled before during the Parliament. Singh thus became the 92nd Labour MP to defy the whip since the 2005 election, though he was already known to the whips, having voted against the Government nine times in the last parliament.

An early-day motion on this issue (EDM 1796) had been signed by 55 MPs, including 27 Labour Members; of these 27, 12 ended up voting for Gerrard's amendment. Three Conservatives – Tony Baldry, John Bercow and Peter Bottomley – also defied their whip (the Conservative frontbench line being to abstain) to vote for Gerrard's amendment. Earlier in the evening, Clare Short had been the only Labour MP to oppose the third programme motion for the Bill.

Identity Cards Bill

Two other rebellions occurred last night, on either side of the divisions on the Immigration Bill – both on the Identity Cards Bill. At 2.45pm, the Commons rejected a Lords amendment that would have delayed linking the issue of identity cards with the issue of passports until 2012. Nine Labour MPs defied the Government, all of whom had voted against the Bill before. Peers then voted by 287 votes to 60 in favour of a compromise, which the Government accepted, whereby anyone who renews a passport will be put on a national ID database, but will not now be forced to have an ID card until 2010, instead of 2008. At 10.30pm, in the last vote of the evening, the Commons voted 301 votes to 84 in favour of the compromise. Despite the fact that the Conservatives supported the amendment, only 24 Conservatives joined 278 Labour MPs in the aye lobby. The no lobby comprised 60 Liberal Democrats, eight Conservatives, six Labour, five DUP, four SNP, one Plaid Cymru, as well as Labour MP, David Taylor who cast a deliberate abstention by voting in both lobbies.

The Conservatives to vote against the comprise were:

Adam Afriyie*
Tony Baldry
William Cash
Philip Hollobone*
Stewart Jackson*
Brooks Newmark*
Grant Shapps*
Richard Shepherd

Five of the eight Tory rebels (marked with an asterix) belong to the 2005 intake of MPs. This is not the first vote in which members of the 2005 Conservative intake have shown a willingness to vote against the whip, suggesting that David Cameron may face more of a problem maintaining the loyalty of this group than might have been expected.

The six Labour opponents of the final compromise were:

Diane Abbott
Jeremy Corbyn
Kelvin Hopkins
Lynne Jones
John McDonnell
Robert Wareing

The earlier vote had seen five of these six vote against (Abbott not doing so), along with Mark Fisher, Kate Hoey, Glenda Jackson, and Alan Simpson.