

## Whips give lesson in offender management

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Wednesday 28 February saw the largest Labour backbench rebellion so far this session when 51 Labour backbenchers (including tellers) voted in favour of an amendment in the name of Neil Gerrard during the Report stage of the Offender Management Bill. Gerrard's amendment would have excluded private firms and voluntary groups from carrying out 'core' probation tasks. With the Conservatives abstaining, the Government won by 267 to 111. The Government then comfortably won the Bill's Third Reading vote by 293 votes to 268, despite a rebellion by 24 Labour MPs, who voted alongside the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats in the no lobby. This short briefing paper explains the voting patterns on these two votes.

The two rebellions saw a total of 53 Labour MPs defy their party's line, enough to have brought about a defeat – and yet the Government still emerged victorious. This was because the larger rebellion occurred on a vote in which the Conservatives were abstaining, giving a good way out for Labour MPs who wanted to demonstrate their dislike of the Bill but who didn't want to inflict the first Third Reading defeat since July 1977 (and before that since 1919). This would also have been helped by the traditional antipathy that many Labour MPs have to voting in the same lobby as the Conservatives, a point exploited by Tony Blair at Prime Minister's Questions, and John Reid in his Third Reading speech. And we wouldn't be at all surprised to find that the Whips' Office did deals with some of the rebels, trading a rebellion on Gerrard's amendment in return for a vote for the Government or an abstention on Third Reading; they've done it before.

Of the 51 Labour MPs who rebelled on Gerrard's amendment, only 22 went on to vote against Third Reading. (Two Labour MPs – Peter Kilfoyle and Bob Marshall-Andrews – abstained on the amendment, and voted against Third Reading). A further 16 Labour MPs voted for the Government on Third Reading having voted for the rebel amendment, whilst 13 Labour MPs who had voted for the rebel amendment abstained on Third Reading.

The attached table lists the 59 Labour MPs to have rebelled on the Bill so far. Only eight Labour MPs – Burgon, Drew, Gibson, Hopkins, Jones, McDonnell, Simpson and Wood – have voted against all four aspects of the Bill. The Government whips even succeeded in persuading some of the original Second Reading rebels to stay away (Clapham, Fisher, Hoey and Mudie), abstain (Dean and Truswell) or to vote for the Government on Third Reading (Sheerman and Skinner).<sup>1</sup> Indeed, of the 27 Labour rebels on Second Reading, a mere 17 also voted against Third Reading.

Who were the rebels? The only new rebel was Nia Griffith, a member of the 2005 intake of MPs. Of the 53 Labour rebels, no fewer than 49 had rebelled so far this Parliament. The remaining three – Karen Buck, David Lepper and Judy Mallaber – were all known to the whips, having rebelled in the 2001 Parliament.

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<sup>1</sup> A fifth Labour MP – Jon Trickett – who had voted against the Government on Second Reading – missed Wednesday's voting due to family reasons.

## Labour rebels on the Offender Management Bill

Name of MP	2nd Reading	Programme	Report	3rd Reading
Abbott, Diane	G	G	X	X
Austin, John	A	A	X	A
Betts, Clive	G	G	X	G
Buck, Karen	G	G	X	G
Burgon, Colin	X	X	X	X
Campbell, Ronnie	G	G	X	A
Caton, Martin	X	G	X	X
Clapham, Michael	X	G	a	a
Clark, Katy	X	A	X	X
Cook, Frank	G	G	X	G
Corbyn, Jeremy	X	X	X	X
Cousins, Jim	G	G	X	G
Cruddas, Jon	G	G	X	A
Cryer, Ann	A	A	X	G
Dean, Janet	X	A	X	A
Dobson, Frank	A	A	X	A
Drew, David	X	X	X	X
Dunwoody, Gwyneth	A	A	X	A
Efford, Clive	G	G	X	G
Farrelly, Paul	X	A	X	X
Fisher, Mark	X	A	a	a
Flynn, Paul	A	A	X	X
Gerrard, Neil	X	G	X	X
Gibson, Dr Ian	X	X	X	X
Griffith, Nia	G	G	X	G
Grogan, John	X	X	X	X
Hall, Patrick	G	G	X	G
Hamilton, David	A	A	X	G
Havard, Dai	A	A	X	X
Hoey, Kate	X	X	a	a
Hopkins, Kelvin	X	X	X	X
Jones, Dr Lynne	X	X	X	X
Kilfoyle, Peter	A	A	A	X
Lepper, David	G	G	X	G
McCafferty, Chris	G	G	X	A
McDonnell, John	X	X	X	X
Mallaber, Judy	G	G	X	G
Marshall-Andrews, Bob	A	A	A	X
Meacher, Michael	X	A	X	X
Mitchell, Austin	X	A	X	G
Mudie, George	X	G	a	a
Mullin, Chris	G	G	X	A
Murphy, Denis	G	G	X	G
Prentice, Gordon	A	A	X	X
Riordan, Linda	A	A	X	X
Ruddock, Joan	G	A	X	G
Salter, Martin	A	A	X	A
Sheerman, Barry	X	G	G	G
Simpson, Alan	X	X	X	X

Skinner, Dennis	X	G	X	G
Taylor, David	X	G	X	X
Trickett, Jon	X	X	a	a
Truswell, Paul	X	A	X	A
Turner, Desmond	A	A	X	A
Vaz, Keith	G	G	X	G
Walley, Joan	G	G	X	A
Wareing, Robert	X	A	X	X
Winnick, David	A	A	X	A
Wood, Mike	X	X	X	X

*Note:* X indicates a vote against the Government; A an abstention; a an absence (which could be an abstention); and G a vote for the Government.