

On 23 April 2012 (page [23]) *The Times* published the following letter from FB . On page 13 of that issue *The Times* had an article 'How all-party report on Lords reform is set to reveal splits within all parties'. Alongside this headline there was a box referring readers to FB's letter with the message **I can suggest a bold and logical solution.**

# **An evolutionary solution to the problem of House of Lords reform**

by Francis Bennion

Your report (Apl 20) shows that the Coalition is in danger of a fatal split over House of Lords reform. Jesse Norman MP sums up the dilemma when he says that the Government's plans to create an 80 per cent elected Senate would undermine the primacy of the House of Commons, giving senators more legitimacy than MPs. As a retired Parliamentary Counsel, with long experience of how the present House of Lords works, I can suggest a solution. It is bold, but represents a logical evolution of Parliament. [It revives a proposal I made many years ago in three letters in *The Times* (18 November 1976 and 4 and 12 September 1978).<sup>1</sup>]

The main function of the present House of Lords is to revise proposed legislation. Nearly all the Bill amendments which the House of Lords succeeds in making and the government accepts are drafted by Parliamentary Counsel. They could easily be made by the elected House of Commons itself. Instead of going to the House of Lords, a Bill given a third reading by the Commons could go on to be considered by a Revising Committee made up of selected Commons MPs.

Under this scheme the amending Bill now contemplated by the Coalition would, in place of the present House of Lords, provide for the future use of its chamber, and its staff, library etc., exclusively by the Revising Committee. The total number of MPs would be increased to allow for some to serve on the Revising Committee.

Some of the present experienced members of the House of Lords might be candidates for election in the new constituencies, so as to assist in the transition and provide continuity. They would bring to the Revising Committee some of the calm, courteous atmosphere of the by now defunct House of Lords. The constitutional conventions now applying to the House of Lords would apply instead to the Revising Committee.

[It is important that this, like any major constitutional change, should be put to a referendum; but only if it commands cross-party support.]

*Note: Passages in square brackets were omitted from the published letter.*

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*The Times* 23 Apr 2012 p 23.

Any footnotes are shown at the bottom of each page  
For full version of abbreviations click 'Abbreviations' on FB's website

## **References:**

None

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.francisbennion.com/specialism/hol-reform.htm](http://www.francisbennion.com/specialism/hol-reform.htm).