

## 6. The Final Parliamentary Debate

As usual, effort was expended chipping at the details, in particular the “*clear days notice*” to the Police Commissioner prior to a demonstration.

**Simon Hughes** pointed out: “*[W]e often do things at a day’s notice in the house. Where do people who want to protest about something that the Government suddenly announce or introduce in Parliament go so that we can hear and see them...?*”

Without a hint of irony the minister, **Caroline Flint**, replied: “*People... can come to Central Lobby and demand to see their Member of Parliament. I do not believe that there is a lack of opportunity for people to express their point of view. If one person, who may have a huge amount of paraphernalia and loud hailer, wants to hold a demonstration, they should seek the authority to do so, just as people holding a procession do...*”

But **David Heath** had to point out, yet again: “*I do not think the Government have a clue what they are doing. They simply have a visceral dislike of someone disagreeing so obviously, and in such a prolonged way, on their doorstep. That is why we have what can only be best described... as a sledgehammer to crack the proverbial nut. I do not believe that the Government should be making it a criminal offence for someone simply to express his view in Parliament square in a time-honoured way, and I do not think they should extend the area to 1 km. I find it alarming enough that the Minister has changed the Government’s position since she said in Committee that the intention was to protect Parliament. Now it is Parliament and Government buildings, which is illustrative in itself.*”

**Jeremy Corbyn** asked: “*Are we seriously saying that, because one person, Brian Haw, has been arrested for three years, we will sweep away the right that has existed for centuries for people to come to the House, without seeking permission from anyone, to express their view...? This is a very serious matter. I urge hon. Members to think very carefully... before denying that right to others who wish to come to the House and make life uncomfortable for us.*”

The MPs then voted twice, the first time to pass **Section 129**, which outlawed all unauthorised demonstrations in Parliament Square (301 votes to 88), and a second time to pass **Sections 130 to 135**, to stipulate the conditions under which the police would give authorisation (265 votes to 240).

The MPs who voted on either side of the divide are listed in two boxes at the bottom of the page. Only 88 MPs out of 659 were consistent enough with their votes to be reported as being against passing this law.

## 7. Royal Assent

The Lords reviewed the *Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill* on 5 April 2005. In their discussion of the clauses, they considered requiring that there be a “*serious disruption to the life of the community*”, rather than just a disruption, but they didn’t carry it through.

They also accepted the promise from **Baroness Scotland of Ainstah** that, although the Bill allowed for Trafalgar Square to be part of the designated area, the Secretary of State would never put it in.

At this stage, two small concessions were made. You were allowed to give the Police Commissioner less than 6 days notice if there was a good enough excuse (for example, the matter on you wanted to protest arose sooner than this period), and the Commissioner could send you your permission by email, which, I guess is a way to save him money.

The 2005 general election was then called on 5th April, and the MPs had to work quickly to get this piece of legislation onto the books before Parliament dissolved and all their fine work would have been wasted. They ditched the sections of the Bill to do with “religious hatred” that could have caused delay in the House of Lords, and secured its assent into law on the 7th April 2005.

On 17th May 2005, after the sorry excuse for “democracy” that our defunct electoral system and compulsive lying political class represents, the MPs returned once again to Parliament. The Speaker, **Michael Martin**, stood at the beginning of the session to read the “*Sessional Orders*” to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, and said: “*Before the Dissolution, legislation was enacted on the control of demonstrations and other activities in the environs of Parliament, including Parliament square, but I understand that this will not be brought into effect until later this year. I must express my personal hope that the Government will indeed put the new legislation into effect as soon as possible. That will make it unnecessary for the House to pass the Sessional Order again in future.*”

And so, anybody who was anybody was happy that there would be no more noise from any of the ordinary people who had a mind to think that things were seriously going astray.

## The 316 MPs who voted for the sections of the Act which outlawed the right of free public protest in the vicinity of Government and Parliament

**David Adams** (Lab), **Nick Anger** (Lab), **Bob Atkinson** (Lab), **Daphne Aspinwall** (Lab), **Jonathan Allen** (Lab), **Richard Ainsworth** (Con), **Richard Armstrong** (Lab), **Charles Ainslie** (Lab), **John Aronson** (Con), **Section 132** (Lab), **Section 133** (Lab), **Section 134** (Lab), **Section 135** (Lab), **Section 136** (Lab), **Section 137** (Lab), **Section 138** (Lab), **Section 139** (Lab), **Section 140** (Lab), **Section 141** (Lab), **Section 142** (Lab), **Section 143** (Lab), **Section 144** (Lab), **Section 145** (Lab), **Section 146** (Lab), **Section 147** (Lab), **Section 148** (Lab), **Section 149** (Lab), **Section 150** (Lab), **Section 151** (Lab), **Section 152** (Lab), **Section 153** (Lab), **Section 154** (Lab), **Section 155** (Lab), **Section 156** (Lab), **Section 157** (Lab), **Section 158** (Lab), **Section 159** (Lab), **Section 160** (Lab), **Section 161** (Lab), **Section 162** (Lab), **Section 163** (Lab), **Section 164** (Lab), **Section 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