

Politics

"What a rich, endlessly varied and exciting world politics is for those who are addicted to it. And how inextricably woven are the different strands of greed, ambition, cowardice and idealism. No one's motives are pure; certainly not mine." From: Alan Clark Diaries: Into Politics.

What does one say of Parliament and its inmates that has already not been said? There was a time when the media reported mostly just politics. Scandals were few and far between. Nowadays, it seems there is a scandal for virtually every week that passes. Now commonly referred to as 'sleaze', such scandals have seriously undermined the public's faith in the political system, albeit that such faith was probably misplaced to begin with. One reason this has happened is because of the availability of information is greater now than ever before. And now that the internet can be used to scrutinise the ongoing daily activities of both the House of Lords and the House of Commons, there are few places left for politicians to hide from the glaring eyes of the media and the public alike. But having said this, there are still some impenetrable barriers which we cannot see beyond. Lobby groups are one example. Big business, or those individuals with enough cash, can buy influence within Government. Knowledge of the way Parliament works is another obstacle to the smaller interest groups who cannot afford to pay for someone to lobby on their behalf. They have to know exactly what they can do, and when they can do it, when the opportunity arises. This entails learning the system of Parliament from head to toe. To be a contributor, you have to monitor daily events of Parliament. For example: which Bills are being processed; which committees are meeting; which MPs are planning to debate; etc. You have to be 'on the ball' to take your opportunity lest it pass you by. The money-laden pro-fluoride lobby have influence within Parliament and do take advantage of their opportunities. Conversely, the anti-fluoridation movement is not so well-funded and therefore is nowhere near as effective. Opportunities to influence Government do arise though. One example of a missed opportunity is the Select Committee Report on Health (March, 2001). Although evidence was taken in person from representatives of numerous professional bodies, and some Ministers, evidence was also submitted in the form of memos. One of the subjects discussed by the Select Committee was water fluoridation. Memos were submitted by the pro-fluoride lobby and yet there was not one scrap of evidence was seemingly presented by the anti-fluoridation movement (based on the evidence published in the Report). The Chairman of this particular Select Committee is 'fluoro-sceptic' David Hinchcliffe, MP (Wakefield). Having spoken to Mr Hinchcliffe on his mobile telephone (only briefly), he refused to say why he had not made an effort to ensure the anti-fluoridation movement were represented during the time the Committee discussed fluoridation. Interestingly, he is supposed to be one of the movement's 'allies'. Considering that this Report will be lodged in the House of Commons Library, it is likely that some MPs will use it, along with the other pro-fluoride propaganda in the library, to research the subject prior to any new Bill or statutory device which requires a vote. As a consequence, those MPs will only get a one-sided opinion on fluoridation. Democracy in action? I think not. Useful links More information on the day-to-day business of parliament can be found by using this link: [Politics Information on the Water Fluoridation Bill of 1985](#) can be found by using this link: [1985](#) Also, an external hyperlink to the Water Bill of 2003 is given to further inform the reader.