

HOUSE OF LORDS APPOINTMENTS COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE 32ND MEETING HELD ON 16TH NOVEMBER 2005

Present: Lord Stevenson (Chairman)
Lord Hurd
Lord Dholakia
Mrs Felicity Huston
Baroness Dean

Mr Jim Barron - Secretariat
Ms Geraldine Alexander - Secretariat
Miss Louise Blundell – Secretariat

Apologies

1. Apologies were received from Angela Sarkis.

Chairman's update

2. The Chairman explained that there had not been a formal agenda produced for the meeting as it was called at short notice, principally to discuss the vetting of the party-political peers. It was agreed that the Commission would discuss its role in terms of vetting, consider the names it had been asked to scrutinise and consider the terms of its letter to the Prime Minister.
3. The Chairman informed the Commission about the conclusions of the sub-committee. A letter had been sent to No 10 raising issues about some nominees and clearing 21 of them, although subsequently the Commission had withdrawn its clearance of these names because a question had arisen about one of them.

Commission's vetting role

4. The Commission confirmed its understanding that its remit was to vet for "propriety" those names put to it by the Prime Minister for nomination to the House. It agreed that the meaning of "propriety" went further than carrying out its basic checks with government agencies and included an understanding that the individuals should be in good standing with the community in general, as well as with regulatory authorities. It also agreed that "propriety" meant that the nominee should be credible in terms of his or her future contribution to the work of the House. Regard should also be given to the effect the appointment would have on the reputation of the House of Lords and the honours system more generally.
5. The Commission recognised the need for greater public clarity of its vetting role. It would seek to address this need in due course.

Consideration of names

6. It was noted that the Commission was yet to receive information from HMRC on [REDACTED] of its nominees; [REDACTED]. It was also seeking further information on one nominee from other government departments.
7. It was agreed that the nomination of [REDACTED] needed to be raised with Number 10 as an issue in its own right. Although [REDACTED]'s nomination had now been [REDACTED], the Commission was concerned that the [REDACTED] had been forwarded to it by No 10 without any comment on the propriety of this. A similar concern arose about the nomination of [REDACTED].
8. The Chairman confirmed that he had spoken to the Deputy Chairman of [REDACTED], who confirmed that [REDACTED]'s nomination was endorsed by the Officers of the Party and by the wider party in general. It was agreed that there was no further action to take on this nomination.
9. The Commission noted the comments on [REDACTED]'s nomination in the No10 Honours Secretary's letter of 15 November. It agreed that it had no further comment on [REDACTED]'s nomination.
10. The Commission noted that both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had made donations to other political parties. It was agreed that this was a relevant matter to consider when writing to the Prime Minister.
11. The Commission noted that [REDACTED] of the nominees, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], had been the subject of some public controversy. It would need to consider the effect of this when making its recommendations to the Prime Minister.

Letter to the Prime Minister

12. It was agreed that the Commission would write to the Prime Minister highlighting the immediate problems with the list. This would also be an opportunity to set out the Commission's understanding of its role and to suggest that the system could be improved. The letter would also inform the Prime Minister that the Commission would be giving evidence to the Committee in Standards in Public Life on 24 November. A draft of this letter would be circulated to all members before being sent to the PM.

Other Business

13. The Commission noted that its six nominees had all agreed to their names being recommended for appointment to the Lords. The timing for the announcement was not yet clear.

Commission Secretariat
December 2005