Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative) Click here to see Sarah Live

May we have a debate on the role and responsibilities of Parliamentary Private Secretaries? Is it appropriate in a modern democracy that Members of Parliament who are neither Ministers nor in the Cabinet should be forced to resign if they vote against the Government? Does not that restrict their ability to represent their constituents and disproportionately reduce the power of the House?

George Young (Leader of the House of Commons, House of Commons; North West Hampshire, Conservative)

I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I am sorry that two Parliamentary Private Secretaries left the Government earlier this week. She will know that when somebody is invited to become a Parliamentary Private Secretary, there is an assumed commitment that they will support the Government in the Division Lobby. If anybody feels unhappy about that, they should not become a Parliamentary Private Secretary. If, having become a PPS, someone feels they cannot support the Government in the Division Lobby, they have to stand down. I think that is set out in the ministerial code and it is a convention that is widely understood on both sides of the House.

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