It is a pleasure to follow Pat Glass. I should start with a confession; I am married to a lobbyist. He is a consultant NHS psychiatrist and chair of the Westminster liaison committee for the Royal College of Psychiatrists and provides advice on mental health to all political parties. Having made that confession, I shall confess that I am also a lobbyist; I lobby shamelessly on behalf of my constituents in South Devon.

All of us would agree that lobbying is at the heart of our democracy and the way it works. It is a tragedy that lobbying has acquired a dirty raincoat image. I suggest that we should not throw the raincoat away; we should give the raincoat a wash. I welcome the statement from the Leader of the House that this is all about transparency in representation to decision-makers. But the word “transparency” has become devalued currency. We are talking about the kind of transparency that one sees on an ambulance window, allowing people to see out but not to see in.

We need to look at how transparency applies in our democracy today. At the heart of the matter is the question: who are the decision-makers in our democracy today? As a Back-Bench MP, I find that very many of the decisions made in Parliament take place in rooms to which we are not invited. That is important. Who influences the decisions in those rooms? Very often, in this day and age, it is election strategists. I have no objection to election strategists but if we are to have transparency in representation to decision-makers, we must have transparency in who election strategists, for all political parties, are also representing outside that very important role.

If an election strategist is also working as a paid lobbyist on behalf of big alcohol, big tobacco and other interests around the world, it is very important that people can see what those interests are. It is important that that extends to both Front Benches, and it would be greatly to the credit of Opposition Front-Benchers if they accepted that they should also keep a diary of who meets them. This has to apply across the board to all those making decisions on our behalf in Parliament.

I am glad to see that Mr Allen has returned to his place because I completely agree with him that there is no legislation in this House that could not be improved with pre-legislative scrutiny. I urge the Leader of the House to look at this important point. What would be the harm in bringing this to a Committee to allow not only Members of this House to make sensible recommendations for change, but people outside? We will have a better Bill if we have pre-legislative scrutiny. Let us not be afraid to allow people outside the House to see what we do in this place and who makes representations to us, and let us have a better democracy.

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