

PRIME MINISTER

Thanks - my much
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Bringing the Employment Bill Back to the
Floor of the House

In considering the Parliamentary handling of the Employment Bill, you might like to be reminded of the 1976 precedent of the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill. I attach the discussion on the business question on 26 February 1976 (Flag A) and the subsequent debate on 8 March 1976 (Flag B).

You will remember that the eventual solution was to adjourn the Committee stage and to hold a debate on the Floor of the House on a Motion taking note "of the Government's intention to make fresh provision with regard to agriculture tenancies." After that debate, on which the House did not divide, the new clauses were taken in Committee.

There is no reason which has yet become obvious to the Chief Whip or the Clerks (who have, I hasten to say, been consulted only on the abstract problem) why this precedent should not be followed again, albeit in much more controversial circumstances.

One possible difficulty would be whether the new clauses would be within the scope of the long title of the Employment Bill, which is as follows:

"To provide for payments out of public funds towards trade unions' expenditure in respect of ballots, and for the issue by the Secretary of State of Codes of Practice for the improvement of industrial relations; to make provision in respect of exclusion or expulsion from trade unions and otherwise to amend the law relating to workers, employers, trade unions and employers' associations; to repeal section 1A of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974; and for connected purposes"

The terms of the long title look to me to be sufficient to incorporate the clauses, but I have not of course sought advice on the point.

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