

experiences which enable them to assess whether the legislation would be effective or not. The Life Peers of the House of Lords are chosen by the government and are normally politically neutral. This means that they can represent members of the public indirectly, by evaluating the impact of legislation on members of society. There are also no party whips in the House of Lords which means that the Lords are able to vote freely on proposed Bills. The Law Lords were removed from the House as part of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, which allowed a separation of powers to occur between the Judiciary and Parliament. However, none of the members of the House of Lords have been elected directly by members of the public. This therefore means that they are not accountable to the public and are unlikely to have been able to consult members of the public in the same ways that MPs can communicate with their constituents. Not only this, but there are 92 hereditary peers which means that they inherit their titles and therefore have the right to sit in the House of Lords, without consultation with the public whom they are supposed to represent. Likewise, Life Peers are appointed for the rest of their lives and therefore cannot be removed once appointed. Both these points mean that they do not represent the will of the people. Finally, the Lords themselves are not socially representative of today's modern British society; the House is made up of predominately older, white, middle-class men (e.g. the average age of the Lords is 70). Overall, the House of Lords is not elected by the public and do not socially represent them, therefore jeopardising the representative role of parliament.

The Westminster Parliament is not a microcosm, but rather, a meritocracy. A meritocracy works because it is based on merit, therefore it guarantees that the MPs are able to do their job, and prevents the problems that arise from a microcosm such as giving someone a role that they are incapable of doing simply in order to meet equality targets. Approximately 33% of the current MPs attended a public school, whilst only 7% of the general population attend them. This means that there is a disproportion between the number of people who attend state schools and those who attend public schools and become members of Parliament. The same applies to Oxbridge graduates, where 1/3 of MPs attended one of the two universities. This shows that there is a social class barrier to becoming an MP and that the interests of those who attend state schools are less represented in Parliament. But it does mean that politicians have very high standards of education which allows them to use their knowledge to govern the country more effectively than those who will have a lower standard of education. The issues are the same for gender, ethnicity and sexuality. 51% of the electorate are female, whereas only 22% of MPs are female. A counter argument however, is that it would be impossible for one single person to represent absolutely everyone in their constituency. There is also a growing number of MPs who come from minority backgrounds and do win seats in parliament such as Rushanara Ali who is a female, Bengali Muslim who was elected by her constituency, Bethnal Green and Bow suggesting that Parliament is slowly becoming more representative of today's society.

In conclusion, the Westminster Parliament has some positive aspects, however it is very unrepresentative of modern British society. Individually, MPs do successfully listen to, and represent the views of their constituents as they run weekly surgeries that allow them to directly hear from the people they represent. They are also elected by those who give them the decision making power in free and fair elections. On the other hand, the voting system in the UK means that in some elections, votes are wasted or will lead to an 'elective dictatorship' meaning that voters can be under represented in the House of Commons. Secondly, the Burkean argument shows that there is the potential for MPs to go against the will of the majority of their constituents as demonstrated by Jackie Ballard MP and the vote to criminalise fox hunting in 2001. Party whips also will prevent MPs from supporting the views of their constituents if they do not agree with party policy, and therefore, MPs feel forced to ignore the people who voted them into power to prevent their loyalty to the party being questioned or undermined. The House of Lords is completely unrepresentative as they have the power