

Parliament needs more control over lock downs

I supported the Brady amendment by co sponsoring it on the Order paper. I apologise to readers for a rare mistake of a bad forecast in thinking the Speaker would accept it for debate and decision as a majority of the House clearly supported it.

The important thing is that nonetheless the amendment served its purpose. It did result in the Speaker warning the government they needed to change and to allow debates and votes in government time on the controls, just as we had argued. He had legal advice against taking the amendment which I do not question. The government agreed to come to Parliament over these powers. As an early demonstration of good faith, there will be a proper debate on 2 Statutory Instruments imposing controls, with a vote on each next week.

Many of the Statutory Instruments which have imposed the restrictions on our freedom of movement were not debated or voted on in the past but will now need to be to comply with the Speaker's ruling. Many of them were not put into effect by the government under powers in the Coronavirus Act but under other emergency powers legislation, so trying to vote down the Coronavirus Act would not have dealt with the issues many people are raising. The Coronavirus Act is the source of authority to assist public bodies manage the crisis, which I and others did not wish to stop all the time the restrictions are in place. We want to get at the freedom removing SIs which are mainly issued under the 1984 Public Health (Control of Disease) Act. That will become clearer next week.