

# Hansard Alumni Newsletter

March 2007



## Scholars Programme Update

January 2007 saw the arrival of the Spring 2007 Hansard Scholars. Made up of undergraduate and postgraduate students from countries including the USA, Palestine, New Zealand, Australia, Poland, India, China and Japan, the group are currently coming towards the end of the time in London.

### “Where are they now?”

Beginda Pakpahan, Indonesia

(Autumn 2005 Hansard/ Chevening Research Scholar)



After spending three months in London as a Hansard Research Scholar (during which time he worked for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association), Beginda returned to Indonesia where he joined the United Nations' Office of Coordination for

Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA). As UN Officer, Beginda was closely involved in developing and managing aid projects following the tsunami in western Indonesia and the earthquake in Java.

Beginda is currently a researcher and lecturer at the University of Indonesia (the country's National University) and is still very much involved in local politics. He is now seriously considering building upon what he learnt whilst on the Hansard Research Scholars Programme by undertaking a PhD – again at LSE.

## Other News from the Hansard Society

### Don't Panic! Responding to the Polls

The Hansard Society will shortly be launching the fourth annual *Audit of Political Engagement* (in association with the Electoral Commission).

Questions which will be discussed at the launch include: what impact do polls have on shaping the approach of political parties to the electorate?; how do polls affect democratic processes?; and how are polls reported by the media?

Speakers at the launch will include: Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP, Labour Party Chair, Peter Riddell, *The Times* and Hansard Society Council, Lord Tyler, Lib Dem Spokesperson for Constitutional Affairs in the House of Lords, and a spokesperson for the Conservative Party

### HeadsUp Forum

HeadsUp is a moderated online forum, where students deliberate on topical issues that relate to work in Parliament amongst themselves and with parliamentarians.

In March, Home Office Minister Liam Byrne MP joined politicians from Westminster, Scotland and Wales to discuss topical questions of crime, prison and the criminal justice system with young people on the Hansard Society HeadsUp forum. The debate received a wide range of excellent comments from young people. The forum can be viewed at [www.HeadsUp.org.uk](http://www.HeadsUp.org.uk).

### Hansard Society gives evidence to the Public Administration Committee



Ross Ferguson, Director of the Hansard Society's eDemocracy Programme gave evidence to the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee on March 8.

The Committee's enquiry *Putting People First?* examines the Government's delivery of public services. Ross gave evidence on how the web can be used to engage users in the development and evaluation of public services and how such processes can enhance the connection between citizens and the state.



### Phase One Report

The Hansard Society's eDemocracy Programme was commissioned to administer and evaluate 'Digital Dialogues', an independent investigation into the use of online technologies to promote dialogue between central government and the public.

Phase One of 'Digital Dialogues' took place between December 05 – June 06. Six case study evaluations were completed, involving a cross-section of central government agencies, departments and ministerial offices. The case studies used web-based applications, including blogs, forums, surveys and webchats. Evaluations were generated through analysis of site statistics, interviews with case study owners in government, and surveys with registrants and site users. Read and comment on the Interim Report online at: [www.digitaldialogues.org.uk/interimreport](http://www.digitaldialogues.org.uk/interimreport)

The report from Phase Two (August 06 – February 07) is scheduled for April 2007.

### Democracy & Political Parties

The fourth publication in the Hansard Society's *Democracy Series*, *Democracy & Political Parties* discusses the role of political parties, how they can improve their engagement with the public and what the future might hold for this type of political organisation.

Professor Paul Webb set out his ideas about democratic disconnect and its relationship with political parties, as well as the wider democratic system, with commentaries by Treasury Minister John Healey MP, Geoff Mulgan and Baroness Shephard.

Join the debate on how political parties should adapt for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and download your free PDF copy of the publication here:

[www.democracyseries.org.uk/forum/democracy\\_and\\_political\\_parties](http://www.democracyseries.org.uk/forum/democracy_and_political_parties)

### **A Year in the Life: From member of public to Member of Parliament**



The Hansard Society report, *A Year in the Life*, was launched in December in the Palace of Westminster. The report tells the story of what happens when members of the public become Members of Parliament. We give an insight into what actually takes place after the votes are counted, the acceptance speeches have been made and the champagne drunk. In other words, once the real work begins

The Hansard Society spent twelve months monitoring the 2005 intake of first-time MPs. We looked at their experiences, ambitions, how they operate and their views on Parliament. The report sets out how they set about learning the trade and the hurdles they faced during a year in the life of an MP.

### **Parliamentary Affairs**



*Parliamentary Affairs*, a quarterly journal of representative politics, contains vital analysis and debate of recent political events. The January 2007 edition includes articles on constitutional reform, citizenship education and what the public wants from MPs as well as a lively debate on representation.

*Parliamentary Affairs* is a long-established journal published by Oxford University Press in association with the Hansard Society. Individual subscriptions cost £50 a year; special reduced subscriptions are available for Hansard Alumni.

The next issue of *Parliamentary Affairs* will be published in April 2007.

### **Y Vote Mock Elections 2007**

Almost a hundred Scottish schools have registered for the Hansard Society's Y Vote Mock Election programme which takes place around the forthcoming Scottish Parliament and Local Elections. To discover the issues that young people will be thinking about during the mock elections, we've linked up with YoungScot to create an online poll asking young people what they felt was the most important issue as they go to the polls.

To date, over 350 young people have registered their vote, naming 'healthy living' as their top concern. The programme has also received support from Hugh Henry, Minister for Education and Young People in the Scottish Executive who has encouraged other schools to participate.

The results of the mock elections across all schools in Scotland will be collated and the winning party will be announced shortly before the 3 May elections. You can access the Y Vote Mock Election site at:

[www.mockelections.co.uk](http://www.mockelections.co.uk)

### **In MPs' hands to avoid 'train wreck' on Lords Reform, says Jack Straw**

Ahead of March's historic House of Commons debate and vote on Lords Reform, Jack Straw MP appealed for consensus on the Lords and quoted the recent Hansard Society/YouGov survey on public attitudes to a 'hybrid' House of Lords.

Speaking at a Hansard Society meeting, Mr Straw, Leader of the House of Commons, said it was in the hands of MPs to avoid a 'train wreck' on the issue. He urged MPs to use the free vote on options for Lords Reform to come to a positive outcome. Other speakers were Theresa May MP, David Heath MP, Peter Kellner (YouGov) and Baroness Hayman (Lord Speaker). The Hansard Society has produced a Briefing Note (see: [www.hansardsociety.org.uk/node/view/717](http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/node/view/717)) on Lords reform outlining developments since 1997.

### **Calling all Hansard Society Alumni!**

We'd like to remind you all about our 'Recommend a Friend' scheme – if you have a friend or colleague who you think may be interested in taking part in the Hansard Scholars Programme then please let us know. As a token of our gratitude, each Hansard Alumnus who recommends someone who then participates in the Programme will receive:

- Free membership of the Hansard Society for one year
- Copies of all Hansard Society publications for one year
- Copies of "Parliament, Politics & Lawmaking" (Ed. Alex Brazier, Hansard Society 2004), "Members Only? Parliament in the Public Eye" (Puttnam Commission, Hansard Society 2005) and "New Politics, New Parliament" (Brazier, Flinders & McHugh, HS 2005).

### **And finally...**

#### **London School of Economics**

If you went on to do a Master's (or any other academic course, for that matter) at LSE, we'd be very interested to hear from you. Drop us a line!

**For further details on any of the stories covered in this newsletter, please contact the Hansard Alumni team at:**  
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