

TEXT OF DAVID DAVIS' STATEMENT

“The name of my constituency is Haltemprice and Howden. The word Haltemprice is derived from the motto of a medieval priory, and in Old French it means “Noble Endeavour”.

I had always viewed membership of this House as a noble endeavour, not least because we and our forebears have for centuries fiercely defended the fundamental freedoms of our citizens. Or we did, up until yesterday.

This Sunday is the anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta, the document that guarantees the most fundamental of British freedoms, habeas corpus. The right not to be imprisoned for prolonged periods by the state without being told the charge against you.

But yesterday this House decided to allow the state to lock up potentially innocent people for 6 weeks without charge.

This Counter Terrorism Bill will in all likelihood be rejected by the House of Lords. What is their function, after all, if not to defend the Magna Carta? But because the impetus behind it is political, the government will be tempted to use the Parliament Act to enforce its will and insist on its right to set aside a cornerstone of all our liberties.

It has no democratic mandate to do this, since 42 days was not a manifesto commitment. And its legal standing is dubious, to say the least. But purely for political reasons, this Government will do it.

And because the generic security arguments relied upon are ones that will never go away, this Government will be tempted again in the future to try for 56 days, 70 days, 90 days.

But in truth 42 days is just one albeit perhaps the most salient example of the

insidious, surreptitious and relentless erosion of fundamental British freedoms under this Government.

We will have the most intrusive identity card system in the world. A CCTV camera for every 14 citizens.

And a DNA database bigger than that of any dictatorship with thousands of innocent children and a million innocent citizens on it.

We've witnessed a sustained assault on jury trials that bulwark against bad law and its arbitrary abuse by the state. Shortcuts with our justice system that have left it both less firm and less fair.

And the creation of a database state, opening up our private lives to the prying eyes of official snooper and exposing our personal data to careless civil servants and criminal hackers.

The state has security powers that clamp down on peaceful protest, and so-called hate laws that stifle legitimate debate whilst those inciting violence get off scot-free.

This cannot go on. It must be stopped.

And for that reason, today I feel that it is incumbent upon me to take a stand.

I will be resigning my membership of this House, and I intend to force a by-election in Haltemprice and Howden.

I will not fight it on the government's general record. There is little point in repeating Crewe and Nantwich.

I will not fight it on my personal record. I am just a piece in this chess game. I will fight this by-election against the slow strangulation of fundamental British freedoms by this Government.

This may be the last speech I make to the House. Of course, that would be a cause of deep regret to me.

But at least my electorate, and the nation as a whole, would have had the opportunity to debate and consider one of the most fundamental issues of the day the ever intrusive power of the state into their daily lives, the loss of privacy, the loss of freedom and the steady attrition undermining the rule of law.

And if they do send me back here it will be with a single, simple message.

That the monstrosity of a law that we passed yesterday should not stand. That the British people have grown tired of the inflated, arbitrary and arrogant power accumulated by this Government. And that the slow but ceaseless encroachment of the state into their daily lives must come to an end.”