

## The House of Commons needs to join the 21st century

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I have published this video this morning. In it, I ask how we can have a serious parliament that can do its job when there aren't enough seats for all MPs and when so many of parliament's systems are so antiquated it's hardly got into the 20th century as yet, let alone the twenty-first. Isn't it time it got its act together?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFxBpNyEpOo>

The audio version of this video is here:

[https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=xepxt-1664fdf-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=ff6d00&font-color=&logo\\_link=episode\\_page&btn-skin=3267a3](https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=xepxt-1664fdf-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=ff6d00&font-color=&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=3267a3)

The transcript is:

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*The House of Commons is at this point in time trying to prove that it is the most ridiculous of places in which to work.*

*There are all sorts of reasons for saying that.*

*There are, of course, 650 members of the House of Commons, each of whom has quite a number of staff. Four or five in my experience. So, there are lots of people located in and around that building that we're used to and over the road in something called Portcullis House. But, at this moment, none of them have an office. So, there are hundreds and hundreds of new MPs turning up at Westminster, and it might take weeks for any of them to be allocated a space in which they can work. In the meantime, they're sitting on the edge of a cafe desk.*

*That is ludicrous. If ever I heard of a use for AI, it would be to allocate the offices of new MPs in the quickest, most efficient manner possible, so that our democracy can function in the way that it should.*

*But it's not just that. In the chamber of the House of Commons itself, there are never enough seats for everyone to sit down at once. Which is crazy. It was actually designed that way, apparently. It was thought that it would be good to have some people standing up. It would add to the stress and presence of the moment. Which I think is daft.*

*But it's even worse still when we have the current imbalance between the government and opposition benches because there are the same number of seats on both sides of the House. But right now, there are 411 Labour MPs, and given that Sinn Féin don't sit and the Speaker's got their own chair, well, there are about in total another 215 MPs who need to sit on the Opposition benches.*

*So, there are near enough double the number of people wanting to sit on the Government benches from the Opposition benches right now. And the Labour Party whips - God bless them for their wisdom and not a lot else - have decreed that no Labour member is now allowed to sit on the Opposition benches. So, whenever there is a big parliamentary event, Labour cannot turn up in total. They simply won't have the places to sit.*

*This is farcical. And even more farcical, after those two points have been made, is the fact that, where are they meant to put their computer? And, how are they meant to vote?*

*They haven't got a space for a computer. They haven't even got a charging socket to keep themselves going when they're sitting in the House of Commons because they're not meant to be looking at their phone, although, we know that some have in their time, looking at some things which were wholly inappropriate.*

*But that said, why aren't they allowed to? And why can't they just vote on their phones? If I can put my finger on my phone to prove that I have the right to access my bank account, why can't MPs put their finger on their phone to prove that they have the entitlement to vote in the Parliamentary Division, which is what they call a vote, and vote the way that they are required to by their whips, which is frankly what they do almost all the time.*

*But apparently, no, that isn't possible.*

*We have a House of Commons that is not designed for the 20th century, let alone the 21st.*

*There are going to be billions of pounds spent on updating this House of Commons one*

*day, whenever they finally get around to deciding what they're going to do to make the wiring 19th century fit, let alone 21st century fit, because it is dire, and when they get around to removing all the asbestos with which the place is riddled and which makes it thoroughly dangerous. And, when they also get around to removing the leaks come to that because there are hordes of them.*

*So they've got billions of pounds to spend and they still won't bring the place into the 21st century.*

*Isn't it time we took our democracy seriously?*

*Isn't it time we said let's have a workspace for our politicians that reflects the productivity that we require of the rest of the country?*

*Shouldn't they have basic facilities like proper offices and proper opportunities to interact through the web, which everybody would expect wherever they're working, including when they're hot desking? Isn't that a simple thing to suggest?*

*And wouldn't it be wise in that case to just turn that existing building into some form of tourist attraction and build a new office block somewhere else to replace the House of Commons, which clearly does not work?*

*It would be possible. We could get rid of, for example, Horse Guards Parade. Do we really need to have a giant space sitting very near Parliament that is just marched around by a few soldiers once a year to celebrate the King's birthday? I don't think so. I think we could put that to better use. And there are other similar spaces available, I am quite sure.*

*My point is simple. How can we have a democracy that doesn't take itself seriously and then expect those who are participating in it to govern us properly? It's not happening right now and I think we need to get Parliament to move itself well and truly into this century.*