

Extracting interconnected arguments from legislative speech

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Abstract

Legislative floor speeches typically contain interconnected arguments in favor of or against a proposition or a specific legislative measure: for example, vote for A because of B, and B holds because of C. These arguments help shed light on issues such as polarization, and it is therefore useful to be able to code them, if possible, on a large scale. In this paper, we discuss that possibility, first explicating a detailed hand-coding method for coding speeches as arguments, then considering which automated methods offer the best possibility of processing raw text to generate arguments. We conclude, on a preliminary basis, that a semi-automated method, involving dependency parses, types of argumentative connectors, and machine learning, is currently the most promising candidate.

Floor speeches are one of the most common, and highest profile, actions performed by legislators in parliaments around the globe. Since a verbatim record of each speech is readily available, scholars wishing to study patterns in speeches have an enormous source of potential data at their disposal. Thus, for example, Spirling (2016) analyzed half a million speeches made in the UK parliament between 1832 and 1915, showing that the significant expansion of the franchise in 1867 was followed almost immediately by a decline in the complexity of those speeches; he further showed in a collaborative paper (Peterson and Spirling 2016) that the 3.5 million speeches made between 1935 and 2013 became harder to identify as Labour or Conservative solely on the basis of the relative frequency of the words in those speeches. Other scholars have also analyzed large corpora of legislative speeches for the UK House of Commons,¹ as well as for the US Senate specifically² and the US Congress more generally,³ for the Netherlands,⁴ for Russian regional parliaments,⁵ and for the UN General Assembly.⁶

One of the aspects of floor speeches that has not, to date, been studied systematically across debates, or speakers, or countries, is the arguments put forward in floor speeches. Although of course there are various types of speeches, by far the largest number of them, at least in the context of legislative debates, are arguments in favor of a particular position, usually, though not always,

¹ 587 speeches on the repeal of the Corn Laws to study the themes of the debate (Schonhardt-Bailey 2006); over 200,000 question-answer pairs during weekly question periods over 37 years to study question types (Zhang, Spirling, and Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil 2017); all speeches and oral questions or answers from 1909-2013 to study the emotional polarity of debates (Rheault et al. 2016).

² All floor speeches for 20 years to study polarization (Lauderdale and Herzog 2016); all floor speeches for 8 years to study topics of speeches (Quinn et al. 2010).

³ All floor speeches for 142 years to study partisanship (Gentzkow, Shapiro, and Taddy 2017); floor speeches for 2005 to study ideology (Iyyer et al. 2014); all floor speeches from 1994-2012 to study polarization (Correia, Chan, and Rocha 2015).

⁴ All floor speeches in both houses for 13 years to study topics of debate (van der Zwaan, Marx, and Kamps 2016).

⁵ 233 speeches over 4 years to study similarity to Putin or Medvedev (Baturu and Mikhaylov 2013).

⁶ All General Debate speeches for 15 years to study differences between previously colonized and never colonized states (Miller 2013: ch. 2).

about legislation (say, in support of a bill, or against a resolution).⁷ These arguments may have various overt or hidden political goals: to ingratiate the member of parliament with the party hierarchy or with activists in the local constituency; to signal to journalists and others that the legislator is behaving in a thoughtful way or perhaps showing courage; to build up a colleague on the same side of the issue or to rebut one on the other side; to extort concessions from the author of the bill, to signal future demands, or to explain why this vote is different from others; or simply as an expression of the member's beliefs on the issue. But whatever the reasons for putting forward the arguments, those arguments are made in support of a position (cf. the famous Austin distinction between perlocutionary force and illocutionary force) on the bill itself.⁸ The question we address in this paper is whether, and if so, how, it is possible to analyze the pattern of arguments in floor speeches, but along the lines of the research mentioned above, namely, for a large number of speeches.

We proceed as follows. First, we discuss what we mean by arguments, at least as they are made in speeches. Then we lay out a methodology for hand-coding legislative floor speeches for their arguments, including a brief discussion of requisites for hand-coding.⁹ We then turn to a discussion of the ways in which the coding of speeches for arguments can be automated, whether fully or in part. Our tentative conclusion is that the former possibility is, at least given current technology, unlikely to succeed, whereas the latter offers some chance of success.

⁷ Speeches may also put forward arguments about a government minister, or an existing policy, but these speeches are usually made on occasions other than those of legislative debate: "morning" business, for example, which is when other speeches, such as praising individuals or commemorating a famous event, are made as well.

⁸ We do find every so often that a legislator makes a speech which is close to being on the other side from her or his subsequent vote, but even then, at least a small portion of the speech is a justification for the vote. It is rare, though not unheard of, for a legislator to give a speech against a bill, then vote in favor. But both these situations are still ones in which the speech puts forward arguments on the bill.

⁹ Our terminology, and our methodology, have been developed in a research project on Harold Lasswell's "garrison state" hypothesis, using overlaps in arguments made in floor speeches in the parliaments of 7 different countries to see if, over time, there is an increase in consensus on national security-related issues, as opposed to other foreign policy issues. See in particular an overview paper about the project (Sylvan et al. 2017), which, inter alia, contains a discussion of some of the points raised here.

1. Arguments: components and schemes

There are numerous ways of classifying arguments, with Toulmin's (1958) canonical six components being perhaps the best known (for a recent review of various schemes, see Walton and Macagno 2015). However, what we have found in our work is that floor speeches, though often quite intricate, are rarely structured in a way that permits certain assertions to be highlighted as key (Sylvan et al. 2017). To be sure, in any given debate, speakers on one side will repeat certain points, but those points are rarely contested as such by speakers on the other side; moreover, when speakers on the first side make those points, they rarely connect them to other points in a consistent or even a structured way.¹⁰ Hence, we have opted for a fairly flat classification scheme.

Here is some terminology. An *argument* is any verbal construction of the sort A because of B. The various types of “because” (e.g., causal, legal, and so forth) will be discussed below; but the important thing is that an argument links two points. As we are concerned with legislation being debated in parliaments, the A point is a *claim*: a speaker’s position on the pending vote. A *reason* is a point made in support, whether directly or indirectly, of a claim. A reason that supports a claim directly (so that we could represent the role of reason X in the speech, say, as “vote for the bill because of X”) is a *core reason*; a reason that supports a core reason (hence, for reason Y, “vote for the bill because of X, and X is the case because of Y”) is a *secondary reason*. There can be multiple core reasons in a speech and also multiple secondary reasons in support of a given core reason; there can also be a secondary reason in support of another secondary reason, with the latter in support of a core reason. In some cases, a reason that is used as a secondary reason in one speech may be used as a core reason in another (indeed, this may even occur within a single paragraph). A *reasoning chain* is a claim supported by a core reason which in turn is supported by at least one secondary reason and, recursively, any secondary reasons in support of the latter. At the minimum, then, reasoning chains are composed of three connected elements: a claim, a core reason, and a secondary reason; but if the secondary reason is in turn supported by one or more additional

¹⁰ In fact, and somewhat to our surprise, even the fairly minimal argumentative machinery we built for capturing the way in which points are related to each other turns out to be of less than overwhelming utility for basic political analysis (see below).

secondary reasons, the reasoning chain may be composed of four, five, or more connected elements, though these latter possibilities are relatively rare. As we will discuss below, two chains in a speech may start out with the same core reason in support of the claim and the same immediately supporting secondary reason in support of the core, then, further down, as it were, diverge into different supporting secondary reasons. Such *compound* chains may, for purposes of pairwise similarity assessment, be treated as composed of multiple individual chains.¹¹ Not all core reasons are part of chains: quite often, speakers put forward a core reason unsupported by a secondary reason¹² because it seems obvious or because, at that moment, they are engaged in constructing a different argument. Finally, the *justification* made in a speech is the combination of the claim and all the reasons and reasoning chains supporting it.¹³

Below, we will discuss the coding process of abducing reasons from speeches. But one point is helpful to anticipate: that not all the points (whether reasons, chains, or other sorts of statements) made by a speaker are necessarily part of the justification. Sometimes, as we mentioned above, a speaker spends relatively little time on the claim and relatively more time on other issues: skirmishing with a long-time adversary, warning about what he or she will do after the vote (e.g., ask for more money or propose follow-up legislation), giving a history lesson, or enunciating a statement of general grievances. Such remarks are not, in essence, part of the debate, and we find that they are often made by speakers from marginal parties or factions. In fact, multiple codes of

¹¹ Chains may be interconnected not only because they all lead to the same claim (this is trivially the normal case, although there are speeches in which more than one claim is made [e.g., to vote in favor of something and also to be wary of something else in the future]), but because they may be so-called “divergent structures” (Freeman 1991) in which a given secondary reason is used in support of more than one “higher” reason. We do not discuss such chains here because they pose no particular issues for coding or similarity assessment, though, interestingly, they are not permitted in many kinds of argument mapping software (since they are not, mathematically speaking, trees).

¹² Note that the reverse cannot be true: a secondary reason must by definition support a core reason, and thus be part of a reasoning chain. However, as we will discuss below, our coding procedure does not actually identify secondary reasons directly from summarized speeches. Instead, we code summaries as a set of candidate core reasons, then, among the latter, identify some as supporting others, i.e., as secondary reasons. The rationale behind this procedure is discussed below.

¹³ Terminological notes. The phrase “reasoning chain,” as we use it, overlaps to some degree with its use in political science and in computational linguistics (e.g., Sniderman 1986; Sizov and Öztürk 2013). Our concept of “argument” is similar, though not identical, to the first two meanings discussed by Hornikx and Hahn (2012); it is definitely not as differentiated in its notion of “support” as in Toulmin’s (1958) model or as limited to direct responses as Rescher’s (1978) notion of a back and forth between two different persons.

NA within a speech are often useful indicators that that speech, at any rate, is peripheral to the arguments in the debate.

It is important to keep in mind that the reasoning chains for a particular speech may not be consistent, at least in the eyes of many observers. A justification may include chains that not only differ in their content but appear contradictory: for example, “vote against the resolution because the Soviets are aggressive; they are aggressive because Stalin made a speech calling for supporting revolutions” and also “vote against the resolution because the Soviets are trying to lull us to sleep; they are trying to lull us to sleep because Stalin made a speech calling for peace and negotiations with us.” A justification can thus be composed of chains that are mutually inconsistent; on the other hand, a particular chain will display some consistency, via the type of connection (as discussed below), even if the individual reasons may appear ludicrous to many observers.

Consider now the connections by which reasons are linked, singly or as chains, to claims. We said above that each reason is connected to other reasons, or to the claim, by a “because.” These *connectors*, as we call them, are subdivided by type: 1) L: legal or conceptual/definitional (e.g., “we can’t do X because it would be unconstitutional”); 2) H: historical (e.g., “we should do it because we’ve done it before”); 3) C: consequential (including slippery slope arguments) of the sort X occurs, triggering Y (e.g., “if we do X, it will put the budget into deficit”); 4) N: normative (e.g., “we can’t do X because it’s immoral to treat people in that way”); 5) A: anthropological (e.g., “we should do X because it’s the only kind of language people like Y understand”); 6) I: identity/who we are or are not (e.g., “we shouldn’t do X because we’re a democracy, not a dictatorship”; “do X because advocates of X [like me, or like my allies] are certain kinds of people”); 7) O: opponents (e.g., “do X because opponents of X are reprobates”); and 8) E: even though (e.g., “do X even though Y is the case”).¹⁴ Note that ad hominem arguments (connection type O), pleas of good faith

¹⁴ This list of connectors was put together after provisionally coding a number of speeches in the U.S. Senate debate over Philippines annexation (Thornton and Sylvan 2015), as amended after coding speeches in the research project. From a technical point of view, the connectors are similar to components in certain standard argument schemes (e.g., concessions in Walton, Reed, and Macagno 2008).

or being on the side of the angels (connection type I) and "notwithstanding" arguments (connection type E) can be categorized using these connectors.

As mentioned earlier, this is a flat classification scheme: we do not at all distinguish between types of reasons, and although we do differentiate types of connectors, the types themselves are not at all related to each other. There are two reasons for this flatness. First, as we will see in the next section, there are hundreds of reasons put forward by speakers in a given debate, with many of those reasons being differentiated from each other on substantive, rather than type of connector, grounds; on the other hand, the exact same reason can be used in different ways. For example, in several of the parliamentary debates we have studied, speakers often assert that the opposition is ignorant: "opponents just don't understand the basic facts of the matter." This can be used as an O-type argument, stressing the opponents' incompetence as a reason to vote opposite to the opponents, but it can also be used as a C-type argument, stressing the consequences of the vote.¹⁵ Similarly, we find that in various debates, the same pair of reasons can be chained together in either direction, depending on the point the speaker wants to make, at least in that part of the speech. As a result, any given debate will contain numerous reasons that can be slotted into multiple schemas in that very debate, and so a flat scheme is the simplest way to go.

Second, quite often, reasons are used in an isolated fashion, rather than chained together. Many paragraphs of many speeches are shopping list-like collections of reasons, whether because the speaker was extemporizing (there is a lot of this in many parliaments, something which perhaps explains the high levels of repetition found quite often, with speakers literally making the same point over and over three, four, or even five times in a row), or simply took several talking points from another list, or thought it was unnecessary to link reasons into chains. This lack of structure helps explain why we find speakers contradicting themselves, often in consecutive paragraphs, and it is why to propose a structured scheme into which reasons would be slotted is of little utility. We

¹⁵ It is tempting to try to figure out just what "the basic facts" refers to, but more often than not, there is simply insufficient detail in a speech to do that.

can put the point provocatively: it is dubious that Toulmin or other scholars of argumentation would even recognize many floor speeches as bona fide arguments.

Thus, our proposal to analyze speeches as arguments points to coding each speech as a justification, i.e., a claim and the various reasons and reasoning chains supporting the claim. Any given debate can then be studied by comparing two or more sets of speeches—for example, those in favor of the bill and those against, or those in one party and those in another party, or even those made early in the debate and those made later—by looking at the degree of overlap of those sets as regards the components of the justifications. (Obviously, the sides can also be compared for their degree of within-set speeches.) We will return to this point below, but note for now that the applicability to phenomena such as polarization is straightforward.

We turn now to the question of coding. To take advantage of the massive numbers of speeches readily available, we would like to find some way of automating the coding of speeches as justifications. However, any automated method will have to be validated with an alternative hand-coding method, and so we first turn to the latter.

2. Hand-coding speeches into arguments

a. General considerations: granularity

In coding a speech, it is necessary to identify which reasons are being used in support of the claim. Here, it is important to avoid two obvious extremes. It clearly would add very little if the reasons being adduced were too general: vote for the resolution because unspecified good things will happen, or because it's right, or because the opponents are wrong in some way or the other. Just as obviously, one should avoid abducting hyper-specific reasons: vote against the bill because its provision for sending troops for 4 months violates Title 14 of Public Law 882, as per the Constitutional Court's ruling in 1973. Within these extremes, there is a broad range of alternatives, and it is impossible to say a priori how abstract or granular reasons should be; instead, the degree depends on the distinctions made by the speaker in developing his/her argument. For example, in

the House of Commons debate of 1947 about reinstating military conscription in the UK, one speaker (Yates) made this particular complaint partway through his speech:

This then is our problem. Here we have these huge Forces and we have a policy of peacetime secretiveness. We do not know where the Forces are or how many there are, for they are stationed all over the world. I understood in my early days in the Labour movement that we did not believe in secret diplomacy, or in secrecy at all. I do not see any reason for approving this Measure. Even the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill) was asking for information which is, of course, absolutely essential if the House is to make a sound decision on a matter of this kind.

The coding procedure we followed (see below) led us to code this passage as a single reason: “Government hasn’t given us the info we need to decide on conscription.” The claim about what Labour used to believe, or the reference to Churchill, are not in this particular case indicative of a finer-grained distinction.

On the other hand, the government minister (Isaacs) who began the debate by introducing the bill made a point of distinguishing between, on the one hand, deferment of service because of employment or educational training, and, on the other hand, reinstatement in a pre-conscription job following military service. We could have coded both these points as a single reason—for example, “not harm conscripts’ civilian employment”—but, because the speaker insisted on the difference as a way, *inter alia*, of arguing for the legislation on grounds of both flexibility and equity, we instead coded two reasons: “Some valid deferments/postponements of service will be permitted” and “Reinstatement rights will continue to apply, with some caveats.” (As there were several other specific but related distinctions made by Isaacs, we then added an additional, more overarching reason, one used with some frequency by other speakers: “Conscription will not interfere with young men’s futures.”)

This emphasis on the speaker's *legislative focus* (whether any particular point is a justification of her/his position on the legislation, as contrasted with other things s/he may also be doing in the speech, such as demonstrating bona fides, settling scores, or announcing future struggles) implies that the reasons used in any one speech may be heterogeneous in their degree of granularity; taking the collection of reasons across all speeches in a given debate, we would thus expect high levels of heterogeneity. Consequently, standard top-down approaches to coding speeches will be problematic, except of course as a starting point (Grimmer and Stewart 2013, D'Orazio et al. 2014; cf. Bunea and Ibenskas 2015). On the other hand, so-called bottom-up approaches, such as that employed in topic modeling methods (Quinn et al. 2010, Lucas et al. 2015, Törnberg and Törnberg 2016) or in Wordfish (Slapin and Proksch 2008, 2014) are also problematic not only because of the sheer size of the corpora needed to discover co-occurrence patterns but, above all, because of the idea that particular phrases are determinately mappable onto reasons irrespective of the speakers' legislative foci.¹⁶ Hence, our hand-coding procedure is very much an exercise in “grounded theory” (Glaser and Strauss 1967): an iterative process in which an initial set of reasons is added to with successive speeches, some reasons being complemented by new ones, others being merged, and still others split up into multiple reasons. As the number of coded speeches increases, the general tendency is that each additional speech adds fewer new reasons and changes few existing ones (though there are some flagrant exceptions to this, typically involving marginal or independent legislators; see below).

b. General considerations: shared reasons, duplicate reasons, and pre-set reasons

The above considerations imply that there is no all-purpose collection of reasons that can be used as a coding template for every speech in a debate, much less across debates. Of course, some reasons will be used by multiple speakers in multiple debates (e.g., “opponents are playing politics”) but

¹⁶ As we will see below, some distinctions (e.g., between “dictators” and “thugs”) may be irrelevant pragmatically, whereas others (e.g., between “we will be able to act” and “we may be able to act”) may be relevant. More importantly, some reasons are inferrable even without explicit words: for example, in the Yates quotation above, there is nowhere a sentence stating explicitly that the government has not in fact given the information; rather, it is an inference that most competent English speakers would routinely and unproblematically make.

there are relatively few of these reasons compared with the specifics of the legislation at hand. Members of parliament can and do use the same substantive reasons and on both sides of an issue, but this is something that has to appear in the data: it cannot be deduced from general ideological orientation or party affiliation.¹⁷ Conversely, some reasons are used by only a single speaker in a debate, though if that is the case, and if certain pairs of those reasons are close in meaning and almost always used together, they are candidates for amalgamation.

In coding for reasons and for reasoning chains, we have often been surprised by absences: points that we would have thought to be obvious are not made, whereas other points are made over and over again. This is additional evidence for there not being a pre-set collection of reasoning chains for a particular debate, among which speakers choose to construct their own speeches. Certainly speakers have in mind that they wish to make a particular point but they cannot do so without words, and it is exactly their choice of words that not only instantiates reasoning chains, but also modifies them. A speaker may want to emphasize a hitherto neglected point, or to modify someone else's argument, and so even if debates were not joined—e.g., if speakers did not try to rebut their opponents—they would still progress, because later speakers will necessarily make slightly different points than earlier ones. (Imagine that you are the 30th speaker in a debate. Even if you only say, “I agree with everyone else on my side of the issue,” the fact of saying that adds a reason: “Those on my side are correct.”)

c. Coding: preliminaries

i. Pre-processing. We take a debate and reduce it in size by eliminating procedural preliminaries (unless they raise substantive points) as well as end-game skirmishes; we also eliminate many lower-level debates on amendments, though some of the latter are kept because they raise general questions. By the same token, we eliminate many colloquies, whether insulting or

¹⁷ For example, in the French 1952 debate about whether to permit the government to continue negotiating the details of a European Defense Community that would include West German troops, proponents of the resolution put forward as a reason that the Soviet Union posed a threat, thereby necessitating West German rearmament; opponents put forward as a reason that the Soviet Union already posed a threat and that West German rearmament ran the risk of angering the Soviet Union to the point where it might attack.

friendly, unless they involve reasons advanced in support of the proposed legislation. Speeches that are interrupted by questions are stitched together. The end result of the pre-processing is that debates are cast as a collection of pro- and anti- speeches. The number of such speeches varies, depending on country and time period, from 20 to 60; those speeches are usually clustered in a handful of days, often nonconsecutive. Depending on the country, the collection of speeches may only include those made in the lower house.

ii. Paraphrasing. We operate on transcripts that are divided into paragraphs, even if paragraphing conventions vary considerably from one language and indeed one parliament to another. Each paragraph in a speech is paraphrased in English (obviously for speeches in other languages, this adds considerable time), sentence by sentence. The paraphrasing aims to simplify sentence structure (in rare cases, sentences have to be broken into parts to produce readable English), eliminate quotations and presentation of numbers, clarify obscure references, standardize or eliminate courtesies, and in various ways to produce texts that can be read as stand-alone documents by other researchers. Paraphrasing is carried out by individual researchers, who subsequently distribute their paraphrases to other researchers and, in semi-weekly meetings, answer questions about confusing or perhaps repetitive points. Often, those question-and-answer sessions involve the paraphraser going back over the original text; it is the first in a series of reliability checks (not ideal, as we would like to have at least a second researcher paraphrasing the same texts, but given resource constraints, it is unavoidable).

iii. Summarizing. After a speech is paraphrased, each paraphrased paragraph is summarized, the idea being to focus on the main point(s) of the speaker in that paragraph. (The main point may be and often is tacit, for example, in "dog whistle" constructions.) Sentence structure is further simplified, repetitions are (usually) eliminated, and tacit points are interpolated or added. Often, the summarizing will be abstract and written in a form quite different in tonality or word choice than the paraphrase. Summaries are produced by the same researcher who did the paraphrasing; as with

the latter, summaries are presented to other researchers for discussion and amendment as a reliability check.

d. Reasons

In principle, each phrase, or at least clause, of each sentence in a summary is coded as one or more reasons. Tacit points, whether complementary to a particular explicit reason or implicit in a set of explicit reasons, will also be coded as reasons, though we signal this to ourselves by putting them in square brackets. To capture the speaker's legislative focus, researchers are instructed to use argument-related formulas such as "vote for the bill because of X," where X is the candidate reason. If for a given summary paragraph there are no arguments that are part of the justification, then instead of the paragraph being coded as one or more reasons, it is coded as NA.

As speeches are coded, researchers construct, draw upon, add to, and at times revise the wording, of a master list of reasons. That list can be quite lengthy: for each of the debates we are currently coding, it appears that there will end up being between 250 and 400 reasons. For retrieval and simplicity purposes, reasons are assigned a number and arranged in the master list either numerically or, in some cases, crudely, by topic (e.g., cost of the bill, motivations of supporters). Although our focus is not on individual reasons, impressionistically, it appears that debates in different parliaments at roughly the same time period overlap at least to some degree on the type of reason: for example, and unsurprisingly, speakers in debates in the UK on conscription (1947), in the US on aid to Greece and Turkey (1947), in Japan on the Peace and Security Treaties (1951), in France and in Germany on the EDC (1952), in Switzerland on the purchase of jet fighters (1947), and even in New Zealand on a dock workers' strike argued to be due to Communist agitation (1951), all advance reasons having to do with the cold war, usually citing the Soviet Union as a threat.

As with paraphrasing and summarizing, reliability checks are built into coding reasons. All coders do a double pass on each paragraph: moving forward, phrase by phrase, in the summaries,

looking to see if there is a reason that captures the explicit and implicit points of each phrase; and backward, reason by reason, to see if each can be assigned to one or more phrase. Participants raise questions and make suggestions to the coder of the speech, who responds, often sparking an extended discussion. Only when all participants are satisfied (or at least willing to go along) are the reasons accepted.

e. Reasoning chains

After each summary paragraph has been assigned reasons, researchers make another pass through the summaries and, for each paragraph, code none, some, or all of the reasons into chains (so far, the number of chains varies per debate from just over 100 to almost 250, depending in part on the length of speeches and argumentative styles). Researchers are instructed to use the same sort of argumentative formula as for the abducing of reasons “vote for the bill because of X, and X because of Y.” In linking reasons into chains, some standard political science ways of producing arguments, notably causality (A leads to B, which leads to C, etc.) have to be modified: if situation A leads to situation B, then the reasons referring to those situations may have to be reversed: vote for the bill because situation B will occur (which is a good thing), and situation B will occur because of situation A. Reliability checks are also built in, as per the procedure for coding reasons.

In forming reasoning chains, it is necessary to specify the kind of connection for each chain, between core reasons and claims, between secondary reasons and core reasons, and between secondary reasons advanced in support of core reasons and secondary reasons advanced in support of other secondary reasons. We have found that for any given chain, each connection must be of the same type: if there is a single lowest connector of type A, the second-to-lowest connector and all higher ones for that chain must also be A; if there is a compound chain with two lowest connectors, one of type A and the other of type H, the second-to-lowest connector must be either A or H and, whichever it is, all higher connectors must be the same, i.e., all A or all H. Violation of this criterion

is indicative of either a missing reason (see below) or a miscoded one.¹⁸ We have found, in particular, that knotty issues of directionality (for a posited chain involving reasons A and B, does A support B or vice-versa?) can be resolved using the homogeneous connector criterion. To concretize the earlier, more abstract discussion of this, the West German EDC debate of 1952 contains considerable invective directed by Christian Democrats at the Communists and vice-versa. One frequently finds pairs of reasons characterizing both the actions of the other side and the personal qualities of its speakers. Using the homogeneous connector criterion, we can decide if the chain should go from the claim to one reason to another reason (if the connector associated with both reasons is type O, i.e., about the opponent) or from the claim to a different reason, then to an additional different reason (if the connector associated with both reasons is type L, i.e., about the definition of the policy). The criterion can also be used to evaluate reasoning "algebra," for example, if one has chains 1-2 and 2-3, one can merge them into 1-2-3 if each chain has the same connectors. However, it should be noted that as an empirical matter, neither the directionality of chains nor the length (or intricacy) of chains seems to distinguish speakers on one side from those on another.

f. Filtering

In order to avoid overemphasizing particular reasons and to capture the main points of a speech, after the reasoning chains are coded, researchers make a final pass and classify as nonretained all reasons that are only used once in that speech.¹⁹ If a reason is nonretained, then the chain in which it may be included will also be nonretained. The result is a datum for each speech consisting, first, of a claim, second, of a filtered set of retained reasons and chains, and third, of a set of nonretained

¹⁸ To be clear, we are not saying that reasons have to be linked into chains by strict logical consistency but simply that the form of reasoning in a chain is locally homogeneous: speakers may and often do contradict themselves, but if a particular bit of reasoning is heterogeneous, it is not usually grasped by listeners as a single argument.

¹⁹ We distinguish between retained and nonretained reasons and chains as a way of capturing the main point of each paragraph, but because it is possible for multiple speakers to put forward the same reason and for at least one of those speakers to put it forward only once (and thus to have some degree of overlap in reasoning), we enter nonretained reasons and nonretained chains in the database along with retained ones. In fact, at least for the three debates analyzed in this paper, the difference in overlap between pairs of speeches with retained reasons and chains only, and pairs with both retained and unretained reasons and chains, is relatively slight, with some scores going up a bit, others down a bit, and others staying roughly the same.

reasons and chains. As per the point above on the directionality and length of chains, we have not found, at least so far, that there is an appreciable difference in how similar two sides are based on only retained, as opposed to all, reasons and chains.

g. Requisite skills

To get an idea of how this set of steps results in the coding of floor speeches as collections of reasons and chains, the appendix contains an example, drawn from the British 1947 debate over the reinstitution of military conscription. The appendix is divided into three parts: first, a speech by a Conservative MP, supporting the bill (the speech appears as it is reprinted in Hansard, complete with interruptions); second, the paragraphs of the speech as they are paraphrased and summarized; and third, the paragraph summaries of the speech, with the reasons, connectors, and reasoning chains coded for each paragraph summary. (Entries in square brackets are the coder's interpolations or inferences, based on what they think is going on in the text, even if it is not stated explicitly by the speaker.) It is evident that to do this kind of coding, the coders themselves need to be proficient (probably native speakers) in the language of the speech, in order to understand certain terms (e.g., "the war-time Measure"; "that benevolent bunch on the Front Bench opposite"; "a song in his heart"; or "Alexander's Ragtime Band"), not all of which can easily be looked up or whose tonality is easily grasped by those not proficient. But, of at least equal importance, the coders need to have an understanding of politics: why the speaker is being sarcastic, say, or that he is defending himself, against whom, with what political intent. This second point is one reason that a methodology like crowd-sourcing, in spite of its potential for processing large amounts of text (Benoit et al. 2016), is problematic: unless the coders can be trained to recognize the political games that are being played, they will omit some reasons and miscode others.²⁰

²⁰ We carried out a crowdsourcing experiment on several texts from the 1947 debate, using exclusively native English speakers and asking them only to paraphrase and summarize paragraphs from different speeches. In spite of receiving instructions beforehand and both authors being in the room to answer questions about the texts or the procedures, only 1 coder out of 12 was able to get over 50% of the paragraphs summarized correctly. In this regard, the relative success reported by Benoit et al. (2016) at crowdsourcing the coding of individual sentences from political manifestos into two categories (economic policy and social policy), then scaling the position ideologically, cannot be taken as much of a

h. Next steps

This paper is on how to look for patterns in floor speeches, not the theoretical questions which those patterns can help to answer. But, as indicated above, one can, by looking at the degree of overlap between pairs or groups of speeches, ask any number of questions about the similarities or differences between speakers on the same or different sides, or parties, or issue areas, or historical eras, or debates, thereby shedding light on phenomena such as polarization or consensus, parties' communications strategies, or legislative coalitions. Because of the fairly high degree of granularity (both the number of reasons and chains, as well as the paragraph-by-paragraph nature of the coding) of the justifications for each speech, fine distinctions can be drawn: for example, how important particular reasons, or sets of reasons, are in accounting for inter-side differences in a specific debate; whether certain types of chains, say consequentialist or normative ones, covary with polarization. The question now is whether these advantages, and the data more generally, can be generated on a large-scale basis, i.e., with automated methods.

3. Automation

Hand-coding of reasons is at the very least facilitated by the preliminary steps of paraphrasing and summarizing. The first of these eliminates extraneous materials and simplifies sentence structure, while the second highlights the legislative focus of the paragraph. This means that when reasons are coded, the phrase-by-phrase method sketched above has a good chance of capturing the points put forward in support of the claim. The question now is whether there is some way of operating on "raw" text—the actual transcripts of the speeches—in such a way as to generate the reasons.

There are three distinct elements that an automated method for generating reasons from speeches must have. First, some features of the raw text, potentially covarying in some way or another with reasons, must be extracted from the text. Second, a set of reasons, or reason-like

guide for the kinds of tasks we are asking of our coders, a point admitted in the article (281). (Benoit et al. also experimented with crowdsourcing speeches in the European Parliament, but again, they divided each speech into sentences and asked the crowdsourcers to assign a code of being in favor of, against, or neutral as regards the measure.)

objects, must either be available to covary with the features of the raw text or else be able to be generated from those features. Third, there must be a mapping or generating procedure for connecting the first set of elements to the second.

a. Features of raw text

Let us start with the first element. For political scientists, the last 20 years has seen major developments about one set of features of texts, namely, individual words (for reviews, see Grimmer and Stewart 2013; Lucas et al. 2015; and Grimmer 2017). Every speech in a debate can be described as a frequency vector of all the words, or, more generally, n-grams (phrases composed of up to n consecutive words), used in the debate, with entries ranging from presumably high numbers to zero. The idea of such "bag of words" approaches would then be to take particular frequency combinations and try to map them onto a particular set, or subset, of reasons. For example, if one were to look at the 2002 debate in the US Congress over whether to authorize the use of military force against Iraq, topic modeling (Roberts et al. 2013; Rule, Cointet, and Bearman 2015) might reveal that proponents of force used particular combinations of words or phrases (say, about weapons of mass destruction, safety, sponsoring Al Qaeda, and Saddam Hussein being a dictator); these could point to certain reasons used by those speakers, such as protecting the United States from WMD or from Al Qaeda, or perhaps to a chain linking WMD protection to Saddam Hussein being a dictator. (How one would come up with these specific reasons, or whether topic modeling could possibly generate anything even close to the 300 reasons typical of legislative debates are issues we will discuss below.)

A related approach, much more prevalent in computational linguistics, would focus not on frequency vectors but on specific words or phrases used to make arguments: discourse connectors such as "then" or "as a result," or argumentative terms like "because," "instead," or "why" (Asr and Demberg 2012; Prasad, Webber, and Joshi 2014). These types of phrases could at the very least signal that certain portions of texts are likely to contain reasons or, if used as a filter, could generate

reasons by, say, using n-grams, or perhaps sentences, immediately preceding and following the discourse connectors or the argumentative terms. For example, if the sentence "Saddam Hussein is a threat because he has no respect for human life" exists in a speech, the method would then generate that sentence as a reason. (Of course, if the word "because," or a synonym, was not present in this sentence, then no reason would be generated. We will return to this point below.)

Both the above approaches treat texts as fairly unstructured. Syntactic connections—for example, the relations of agency signaled by the direct object in "John hit Tom with the bat," "Tom hit John with the bat," and "John and Tom hit with the bat"—are absent, which presumably would make it difficult to generate reasons involving the attribution of responsibility, or of motives. Similarly, semantic connections—for example, the fact that physical objects have different qualities than nonphysical ones, and thus that "John threw the ball" and "John threw the game" mean very different things—are also absent, again making it difficult to generate reasons involving actions claimed to be performed by certain agents, or qualities of those actions or of the agents.

To palliate these shortcomings, we can focus on extracting semantic and/or syntactic features from the text (in practice, the former depends on the latter). Over the last decade or so, work has been done on both of these tasks. Semantic parsers, for example using Framenet annotations, have been developed (e.g. Das et al. 2014) and can produce information about the entities and activities referred to in texts; that information could then be used to generate reasons—assuming, of course, that the system had already been trained on a pre-set list of reasons. Since, as we discussed in the hand-coding section, establishing such a list is problematic, an alternative method is to carry out a syntactic parse for "dependency relations" (i.e., relations between "heads" and "modifiers" in syntactic units, such as who does what to whom; see Schuster and Manning 2016) and then use those relations to generate, if not reasons themselves, then types of connectors between reasons (for example, paragraphs marked by certain types of verb phrases could signal that consequentialist reasons are being used). Approaches using dependency parses have been used for political analysis (e.g., van Atteveldt, Kleinnijenhuis, and Ruigrok 2008; van Atteveldt et al. 2016;

Nulty 2017), though until now this work has been mostly directed at generating predicate maps, somewhat along the lines of Harris's original proposal (1954) for distributional semantics. Since many reasons involve multi-element relations (e.g., (1) doing X (2) will violate (3) the promise (4) we made (5) to our voters) and there are some 37 possible dependency relations, the matching of types of connectors to combinations of dependency information is a complex operation, likely requiring machine learning.

b. Reasons and reason-like objects

Whichever features we might extract from raw text will have to be either mapped onto a set of reasons or types of connectors, or used to generate some such set. From our earlier discussion about granularity, it seems fairly unlikely that we will be able to come up with a set of reasons themselves: many of them are either too debate-specific or else too implicit to come up with a priori. But the situation is not much more promising if we grouped individual reasons into a list of more abstract reasons: say, for example, that instead of having one reason that invading Iraq would lead Saddam Hussein militarily to threaten neighboring countries, and having a second reason that invading would lead to destabilizing the governments of neighboring countries, we amalgamated these into a more abstract reason: that invading Iraq would have bad regional consequences. This ignores the fact that speakers who put forward the second reason are likely to disagree with those who put forward the first, including about the course of action to follow. On the other hand, if we abstract sufficiently to strip off any specificity from the reasons, then we end up with non-illuminating banalities.

It makes more sense to focus, not on reasons, but on types of connectors. These, of course, will have to be given substance for any given paragraph, which implies some sort of hand-coding, but this will still be a significantly more limited task than paraphrasing, summarizing, and coding each paragraph from scratch. In fact, it is worth experimenting to see if some semantic information—say about the valence of certain words or phrases in the text—could be used to

supplement other features of the text, thereby suggesting not only the types of connectors but some of the terms that could be plugged into the connectors. For example, words with positive valence might be candidates for inclusion in I-type connectors (i.e., who we are).

c. Mapping, generating, and learning

How are text features to be linked to reasons, or at least types of connectors? One approach is to find mappings: certain features signal the presence of certain reasons or connectors. If the features in question are words or phrases, or if what they are mapped to are reasons, then this approach is extremely unlikely to succeed, since there is no one-to-one mapping of this sort. The same reason can be used by quite disparate combinations of words; and the same combination of words can evoke quite disparate reasons. For example, one can signal causal relations without using any terms such as "because" or "as a result; conversely, a phrase such as "as a result" can be used not only in a causal fashion but in a temporal one, just as "because" can be used to signal motivation rather than causality.

The same problems arise when it comes to generating reasons from text features. Indirect references, dog whistles, and sarcasm all make it pointless to do cutting and pasting operations from the raw text. Think only about Mark Antony's eulogy for Caesar, with its repeated invocation of Brutus as an "honorable man"; while few members of parliament have anywhere near this level of rhetorical skill, they are nonetheless able to be sufficiently ironic that generating reasons from raw text is unfeasible.

That leaves learning, specifically machine learning. Our proposal is to take speeches already coded into reasons, extract the connectors from those reasons, and tag each paragraph accordingly. The idea would then be to parse the paragraphs, generate the dependency relations in each paragraph, and use machine learning techniques to assign the correct connectors to the paragraphs on the basis of some combination of the dependency relations in those paragraphs. Quite likely,

there will be multiple combinations of dependency relations that fit best with particular connectors, or indeed with combinations of connectors.

As indicated above, an approach of this sort offers the possibility of considerable time savings over hand-coding, thereby permitting many more speeches, and debates, to be analyzed. If it is possible to use the connectors from one debate for other debates (say, debates in the same legislative body, on related issue areas, in a circumscribed period of time; perhaps seeing whether it is possible to extend this to other issue areas, or perhaps even other countries with the same language), the time savings are potentially even greater. We are currently engaged in work along these lines.

4. Conclusion

It is important not to exaggerate the import of the discussion above. It may indeed be possible to semi-automate the study of arguments in legislators' floor speeches, but even under the best of circumstances, researchers will have to code paragraphs by hand. Since that coding is, as we saw, a process that takes training and knowledge of politics, the text as data revolution will have only partial effects on the study of parliamentary debates. To the extent that analyzing those debates involves capturing arguments made by speakers, researchers interested in such analyses will need to choose debates in a careful and canny fashion. We are not yet at the point of having massive data sets of legislative arguments at our disposal—at least not until natural language processing progresses.

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Appendix

1. Speech in a debate as transcribed

Oliver Stanley (Bristol, West) The House has listened with great interest to the speech of the hon. Member for West Leeds (Mr. Stamford) who has explained to us with great clarity the reasons why he is unable to take a stand either for or against the Bill. I think that probably most people in this House approach the decision to be taken tonight, with a certain amount of difficulty and hesitation. I exempt from that, of course, the right hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. C. Davies) and his followers. He has told us that the whole of his band in this House are united in the stand they are taking, and definite in their views. If he has had no difficulty among the Liberal Party in the House of Commons, he cannot say there is the same unity of belief in the Liberal Party throughout the country. If he were to say that, he would show that he had not done, what every good Liberal ought to do every morning, and that is to read the "News Chronicle." If he had read the "News Chronicle" this morning, he would have noticed a leader which stated that: "It is apparent, for instance, that within the Liberal Party all do not think alike on this issue. Parliamentary Liberals are to oppose outright the Government's Conscription Bill. Yet the recent draft statement of Liberal policy, which is to be submitted to the Party Assembly, while regarding conscription as undesirable as a permanent institution goes on to say that, 'the existing situation clearly makes a continuation of the war-time Measure obligatory'." We, no doubt, on our side of the House, could, if we liked, have also made our decision an easy one. I noticed that my Sunday paper, last Sunday, was full of the events of what was described as the biggest sporting day of the year. The semifinals of the Cup, the Grand National, the Boat Race, and a speech by the Attorney-General. This speech was full of bitter complaint against the Tory Party. [Interruption.] Hon. Members opposite, surely, have learned by now never to applaud any statement by the Attorney-General, without waiting, not only for the end of the speech, but for the apology that comes after it. He accuses us of putting party advantage before national interest, and of being prepared to exploit the country's difficulties in order to inconvenience the Socialist Government. It is fair to say that he did not only deal in generalities. He cited a grave charge in support of his views. He said that we have encouraged people to grumble against the blessings which that benevolent bunch on the Front Bench opposite are continually bestowing upon us. If that were true, it would be a grave charge, but, of course, like most of the Attorney-General's charges, it is untrue.

If it were true and if, in fact, we thought nothing but of our party advantage and if we were prepared to subordinate the national interests to them, what a glorious opportunity we should be having this evening. If we chose to oppose this Bill tonight we should not be causing the party opposite only some petty annoyance. We should be inflicting upon it a first-class Parliamentary defeat, and as I speak from this Box we would be looking on many of the faces opposite for the last time—an aesthetic loss but one that could be fully compensated for by the political advantages. No doubt the Chancellor of the Exchequer as he goes into the Lobby tonight will do so with a song in his heart, and as he looks on his followers so soon to be reduced the song may well prove to be, "Will ye no' come back again?" But what the Attorney-General said about this party on Saturday is going to be proved wrong on Tuesday. That is unusually quick, even to disprove a statement by the Attorney-General, and I hope, therefore, that tonight when he and I go through the same Lobby—because we shall be tonight what I think is technically called "fellow travelers"—he will favour us with one of

those felicitous apologies for which, if for nothing else, he has during the last year gained such reputation.

We are going to take on this occasion what is, politically at any rate, the hard course. We are going to divide on this Bill as we think it to be in the national interest and not to our party advantage, and we or at any rate the great majority of us intend to support the Bill. It is not a very pleasant decision for anyone to have to take. There cannot be anybody in any party on any side of the House who likes conscription in peacetime or the consequences that it entails. At the best, it is as was described by an hon. Member opposite in the Debate yesterday a reluctant necessity.

I was very interested yesterday in the speech of the hon. and gallant Member for Dudley (Colonel Wigg). I listened to the whole of it, I read it again this morning and I hope I am not doing the hon. Member an injustice if I say he spoke in favour of the Bill, but curiously enough most of his speech was devoted to a condemnation of my hon. Friends on this side of the House for supporting the Bill, and what remained was a condemnation of the Liberal Party for opposing it. The hon. and gallant Member's chief reason against us was he said that we had been in favour of conscription for 40 years. Even if he is right, I do not see why that would make it wrong for us to vote in favour of it tonight. There is nothing fundamentally wrong in sticking to an opinion for a long time. However, the hon. and gallant Member has only been in the House a short time and he may have been misled by his experiences. I can assure him that only recently has it been considered shameful to maintain after the Election the same themes as one propounded before it. There are many earlier and most respectable precedents in favour of saying the same thing, both before and after appealing to the electors.

As a matter of fact, the hon. and gallant Member was wrong. Conscription has not been a part of the Conservative policy for 40 years. It has never figured in our programme. With regard to the argument of the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Member for Montgomery that if it was not in our programme or speeches or policy it was in our heart of hearts, I would reply: Is not that rather a dangerous argument to put forward? It is, of course, an easy line to take. If one's opponent does not say things to prove one's case it is open to one to say that a certain view is still held by him in his heart of hearts. It is, of course, an argument that several people can use. It would be quite possible, although I would not dream of saying so, to say that "in their heart of hearts" the Liberal Party really believe that conscription is necessary. I should have just as much evidence to give in support of that, as there is in support of the charge which the right hon. and learned Gentleman has brought against us. But it has not been our programme for 40 years. It is not something which we have looked forward to, something we have worked for, or something that we welcome.

We recognise just as well as anybody in this House the hardship and the losses which a policy of this kind is bound to entail. We see the results upon the individual, and we see the results upon the economy of the State. We wish that we could go back to the days in which the Liberal Party was triumphant—and in which to a large extent they still live—when it was unnecessary to bring forward a Measure of this kind. I certainly do not think that a period of service in the Armed Forces is something that is bound to do irreparable harm to a young man who has to undergo it. I think it is an experience from which, as all Members of the House who served in the Armed Forces would agree, a great amount of good can be drawn by an individual. But it would be equally foolish to argue that there is some full educational recompense to counterbalance the disadvantages to the individual in the Service. Therefore, if we support this Bill tonight it is for no love of the Measure itself. It is because we fully admit that though grave difficulties, loss and injuries will be brought about by it, there are still graver consequences on the other side.

During this Debate the opposition to this Measure has been fully expressed. Hon. Members have supported it from many different angles, but in the end all roads seem to lead to the "No" Lobby. I

am not going to deal with some of the more exotic criticisms of this Measure. An hon. Lady who spoke yesterday objected to the Bill because it did not extend to women. She said that it was placing women, most unfairly, amongst the unprivileged. I am sympathetic with feminism, but I really think there is a point when feminism, merges into folly. But there have been certain broad principles of objection to this Bill on which I wish to say a few words. In the first place, there are those who are genuine objectors to compulsory military service on conscientious grounds. They have opposed conscription in peace and war. They have opposed conscription, whether it has been brought in by a Tory Government or a Labour Government; they have opposed it whether their position was popular or unpopular; and they have been prepared, in some cases, to pay heavily, politically speaking, for their opposition. For those people, I and I think everyone in the House has very sincere respect even if we cannot agree with their judgment. To them, I only say this that to my mind the only reason why they are still able to urge in this House views of that kind is because on two occasions the majority of the people of this country have taken a different view.

I understand their point of view, but I cannot understand those people who, while prepared to admit that compulsory service may be morally right in wartime, are also prepared to insist that it is morally wrong in peace. I can see the difference between conscription in peace and conscription in war. I can see the difference in the weight of the argument and I can see the argument that the burden is far more onerous in peace while the reasons for it are less obvious and that the alternative course appears more promising and more possible. But I cannot see the difference between the two on the question of ethics. I cannot see that it is right to do it, as long as it may be too late and wrong to do it if it is done in time to avert danger or disaster.

There was another group who did not object to conscription in itself, but as we were told objected to conscription in support of a foreign policy with which they did not agree. The most prominent exponent of that particular theory was the hon. Member for Gateshead (Mr. Zilliacus). I noticed one hon. Member opposite in a speech yesterday tried to dissuade the hon. Member from his course by the threat that, if and when the hon. Member for Gateshead became Foreign Secretary, he might be reminded of the attitude he was now taking. That was ineffective, largely, I think, because the hon. Member for Gateshead realises that under any Government of which he is likely to be a member, the opportunities for reminding Ministers of previous inconvenient statements will be limited and the results will be discouraging—painfully so. I regard the doctrine advanced by the hon. Member as a most dangerous doctrine. If you are to oppose conscription because you disagree with the foreign policy of the Government, why stop there? Why not oppose all armed forces of any kind? Indeed, such a policy would be much more logical and it would be no more dangerous, because to my mind there is only one thing worse than a bad foreign policy which is strongly supported and that is a bad foreign policy which is weakly supported. The first may possibly lead to war; the second will lead inevitably to defeat. I will say no more upon that particular branch of the objectors because it has been dealt with very effectively by the hon. Gentleman the Member for East Coventry (Mr. Crossman). His reproof must have been felt far more strongly by the hon. Member for Gateshead and his friends than anything I could say. He and the hon. Member for East Coventry were, so recently, in close juxtaposition, both politically and, indeed, in those days, physically. Both literally and figuratively it appears to us, looking from this side of the House, that during the last few months the hon. Member for East Coventry has made a considerable movement to the Right.

Now I come to that third class of opponents of this Bill who I think have been much the most formidable in this Debate, and for whom I myself have most sympathy. They are the people who, however much they may dislike a measure of conscription, are prepared to accept it, if they are convinced that it is necessary and practicable, and if they are shown, as they are entitled to be shown, that the objects for which this Measure is asked are reasonable, and that this is the only practicable way of obtaining the numbers that are required. That group—which, I think, includes

most of us in this House—want and are entitled to have an answer to certain very important questions. We are entitled to know in some detail what are the strategic requirements of this country during the period to be covered by this Bill. We are entitled to know how those requirements are affected in terms of manpower, weapons and tactics by the latest developments in the science of war. We are entitled to know whether all other means of meeting these necessities has been fully exploited, and whether conscription will give us not only the numbers that are required but the type and composition of the forces that are necessary.

Those are formidable questions, and in a Debate of this kind they deserve a detailed answer. It is our complaint that the Debate has been so arranged that no attempt has been made or will be made to answer those questions until the eleventh hour tonight. This Debate was opened by the Minister of Labour. He gave an admirable exposition of the contents of this Bill. By the way, I disagree with an hon. Friend of mine who charged the Minister of Labour with reading. On several occasions I noticed him lifting his head and taking his eyes off the script, and I must warn him that if he goes on like that, he will run a very great risk of being regarded as a “scab” by his more conventional colleagues.

I am sure the right hon. Gentleman will not pretend that he attempted during his speech to deal with the kind of questions to which I have been referring, and which, incidentally, have entered into nine-tenths of all the speeches delivered up to now. His contribution was clearly one that had to be made, and he explained with great clarity important points in the Bill. He dealt with the position of conscientious objectors, claims for reinstatement, and the machinery for postponement, but it is not on questions of that kind that support of or opposition to the Second reading of this Bill will be built. By and large, I think most people, if they were convinced of the necessity of the Measure at all, are prepared to accept a Bill of this kind, and what the House really needs is some authoritative statement upon the real questions which are agitating it. So far the only contribution we have had on questions of higher strategic importance has been a discussion between the hon. Member for Aston (Mr. Wyatt) and Captain Liddell Hart, appearing by kind permission of the hon. Member for Rushcliffe (Mrs. Paton). It was a plucky bout, in which the hon. Member for Aston fought himself to a standstill, but it is no substitute for the kind of argument to which this House is entitled.

I wish the Minister of Defence had found it possible to open the Debate. Not so long ago, I heard him speaking on the subject of finance. I thought then that he had better stick to defence. I regret that through illness I was unable to listen to the speech he made last week on defence, but I read it all through and I began to think that I was wrong. But at any rate the right hon. Gentleman could have given us some lead. He could have obtained from the same organisation that on the other occasion, supplied him with his roneoed impromptus about the Tory Party some considered judgment on the military future. To this side, at any rate, it would have been comparatively new. I realise that he has been making the same speech at gatherings on many occasions, but he must remember that though the reports of those gatherings are as accurate as and much more prompt than the OFFICIAL REPORT, they are not nearly so detailed, and much of what he had to say would have been of novelty and interest to us.

But even if the Minister of Defence was unable to open the Debate—if he feels that, like modern generals, he must lead his troops from the rear—would it not have been possible for one of the Defence Ministers, at any rate, to have taken part earlier? They have from time to time been in the House—at any rate we have seen enough of them to convince us that they are at least in London. Yet not one of those whom, I am afraid, the irreverent describe as “Alexander’s Ragtime Band”, has spoken. There is one point upon which the Secretary of State for Air could have spoken with great authority. A great deal of genuine apprehension has been expressed in the House as to the compatibility of this Measure with our obligations and objects under the United Nations organisation. The right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for Air is a great expert on world

organisation. He was an expert on the League of Nations, and he is already a great expert on the United Nations; and it would have been an authoritative pronouncement coming from him had he been able to indicate that support of this Bill was in no way inconsistent with support of the United Nations.

We might have had the Secretary of State for War—a more recent convert to the doctrine of conscription. As such, an account of his process of conversion would have been acceptable to the House. He could have told us—and it would have had a very great effect upon us all—what hard facts and what inescapable arguments changed the Bourbon of Blackpool into the Moltke of Whitehall.

The Secretary of State for War (Mr. Bellenger) The right hon. Gentleman has made that allegation against me before. I do not know whether he has an official copy of what I said at Blackpool, but if he has, and will do me the honour of reading it, he will find that I have been most consistent in this matter. Indeed, I said at Blackpool that a new National Service Act would be necessary after the war, and the Foreign Secretary referred to that in his reply at Blackpool.

Mr. Stanley I must accept the right hon. Gentleman's statement and apologise to the House that I have been misled by what I believed to be a perfect extract from the speech he made. As soon as I get back I will look up the whole speech. This extract reads as follows: "Are we going to have a continuation of compulsory military conscription? I say that if that is the policy the Labour Party, and especially the trade unions, will never tolerate it. It will result in the lowering of wage standards and labour conditions in industry."

Mr. Bellenger Perhaps the right hon Gentleman will allow me to give a somewhat fuller extract? This is what I said: "Are we going to have a continuation of compulsory military conscription? I hope that Mr. Bevin will give an indication of our long term policy on this issue. Although we recognise that the short term policy will necessitate some continuation of national service for a limited period"—" for which this Bill provides—"

Mr. James Hudson (Ealing, West) No.

Mr. Bellenger The quotation continues: "—"are we going to have compulsion in our national affairs ostensibly to achieve a national aim?"

Mr. Stanley I am perfectly prepared to leave that explanation to the House. I certainly thought that the temporary extension was the extension that the Government already had, and prolonging it for the period of this Bill did certainly appear to me to be some change of policy. Apparently, however, I am wrong and this is exactly the policy which was put to the Conference at Blackpool and accepted by the Labour Party. I, therefore, apologise unreservedly to the right hon. Gentleman.

I want to put to the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Defence certain specific questions, in the hope that he will answer them when he winds up the Debate. The first is in regard to the strategic commitments of this country, and the requirements in personnel which will be necessary to carry them out. In ordinary circumstances, I should have had little doubt that the numbers asked for and the numbers procured by this Measure will be fully justified by the obvious commitments. But there is a doubt which, I think, is in the minds of many hon. Members, and that is about the effect of new weapons upon all that the ordinary man thinks and knows about strategic requirements and the necessities of defence. We are told, in many quarters, that the Services which we have long considered essential are now as inadequate and as useless as the archers, pikemen and charioteers of the past. That is a point on which we are surely entitled to some more definite pronouncement by the Government. My belief is that the effect of new weapons is not to abolish all the old methods

and requirements of defence. I remember being told in the old days, before the last war, that the advent of air power had made the Army useless, and that the advent of armoured fighting vehicles had made infantry superfluous. Neither of these statements proved to be correct. I still think that it does not mean the abolition of all their functions, although it does mean their roles are altered and their emphasis changed.

That, surely, is something which Members cannot be asked to decide themselves on the very scanty information which they can obtain. It should be a subject on which the Government are prepared to give the frankest and fullest information. We see, of course, the necessity for some restraint in this matter, but there is a danger of too great an insistence on secrecy, which leaves an impression, not that there is a plan which must not be disclosed, but that all the secrecy conceals is a failure to think out the implications of the new weapons. I agree with many hon. Members on the other side who have given reasons why they believe it is possible, if we accept these numbers, to attain them by voluntary means. We are told, "Increase the attractions," but those who put forward this policy have never told us to what extent we have to increase them before they have the result we desire. To expect any services, in the order of the magnitude contemplated under the Government's policy to be attained by voluntary recruitment, is wishful thinking. We are very concerned, granted that this policy of conscription will give the numbers that are required, whether it will give us exactly what we want for defence. Mere numbers do not, in themselves, constitute a satisfactory defence.

The main object, I take it, of this conscription policy is to provide us in the future with adequate reserves. I was at the War Office in the early days of the war, and without any running down of an admirable Service which performed great work, I agree with those who say that under conditions of modern warfare and the difficulty of its technique, the prewar Territorial training is not sufficient and cannot be sufficient to provide fully trained reserves at the outbreak of war. I am not saying it may not be possible in certain directions, but speaking generally, of the Territorial Army as a whole, the amount of time men could afford to take from their ordinary civilian occupations, did not give them a real chance to learn the intricacies of the modern technique. For that reason, I agree that something has to be found to supplement the prewar Territorial Army system.

Wing-Commander Millington Would the right hon. Gentleman say, from his experience, that the conduct of the Territorial soldier in France at the beginning of the war was as good as, or better, or worse than the conduct of the militia, which, I believe, behaved badly?

Mr. Stanley I would not for one moment start to draw comparisons about anyone's behaviour. In any case, it is quite irrelevant, because the militia was started two months before the beginning of the war, and no one considered it was possible by the time the war came, that they could be trained. What I am discussing is whether a force which has been in existence for many years, the members of which have given themselves wholeheartedly to their training, could, in fact, have been fully trained, or could have been capable of acting as a fully trained force when the war started. As I say, some new system has to be found to supplement the Territorial system. The advantage of the system put forward is obvious. If a man has had a year and a half of continuous training, then the ordinary Territorial training imposed on that, will keep him up to date, and will make him a fully trained reserve. But that depends on one thing. It depends on the basic training of one and a half years and the subsequent training in the Territorial reserve being in the same arm of the Service. Can we be assured that that is going to happen? Take the case of anti-aircraft defence, on which great importance is placed. Are the people in the reserve as anti-aircraft gunners, who are expected to play an important role on the immediate outbreak of war, the same people who have spent one and a half years of their training in the Army in anti-aircraft gunnery? Unless they are, it is clear that this proposal has little if any advantage over the old Territorial system.

Finally, I would ask the right hon. Gentleman to give us the assurance which has been asked for from all sides, that proper use is now being made of the manpower the Services already have. Unless we are certain of that, we are reluctant to give them more in the future. There cannot be any Member of this House who has not heard, in his constituency or elsewhere, stories which seem to point to a considerable waste of time among those now included in the Services. Rightly or wrongly, these stories have raised general disquiet, and I suggest that that disquiet must be allayed. My right hon. Friend the Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill), speaking yesterday, suggested one way. He suggested the possibility of some kind of Parliamentary committee. What does the right hon. Gentleman think about that? If, for some reason or other, he thinks that that is not a course which he can accept, what alternative has he to offer, because I am certain that this widespread disquiet has got to be allayed? During the Committee stage we shall, of course, deal with many details in the Bill—the choice of Services which will be open to the men called up, whether the conscientious objector gets an advantage over the man who is called up, and so on. We shall want to know whether it may not be necessary to have some tapering-off at the end, just as there is a tapering-off of the pre-Bill conscription in order to get fairness all round. Finally, we shall want to know what opportunities will be given during the one and a half years' service for men to qualify for commissions subsequently in the Reserve. These, and other similar questions, have been put by hon. Members on all sides of the House during the whole of this Debate, and we are, I think, entitled to expect answers to them tonight. Perhaps “expect” is the wrong word, because it indicates a certain amount of confidence, but at all events we hope to get answers tonight.

I think we are entitled to have the information. We are prepared to support this Bill, but we feel that we ought to have the full material upon which the Government which have proposed it have come to their conclusions. These matters are so important that they ought not to be decided merely on Ministerial command, or indeed on personal investigation by private Members. We ought to have the fullest information on which to make up our minds, and I therefore hope that the Minister of Defence this evening will break his usual policy of wordy silence, and give us the whole of the facts, so that we may go into the Lobby tonight not only believing, but knowing, that we are right.

2. Speech paraphrased and summarized

39 Mr. Oliver Stanley (Conservative; pro; 35)

1 The house listened with great interest to Stamford's speech, who explained clearly why he can't stand either against or for this bill. I think most people approach this decision with difficulty and hesitation. Except for Mr. Davies and his followers. He has said they are united and definite in their views. If he had no difficulty among the Liberals in the House, he can't say there's such unity among Liberals through the country. If he said that, he would show he hadn't read the "News Chronicle." If he had read it today, he'd have seen the headline that said not all Liberals think alike on this issue. We conservatives could have also made our decision an easy one. I noticed last Sunday's paper was full of major sporting events and a speech by the Attorney General. This speech was full of bitter complaints against the Tories. Those opposite must have learned never to applaud a speech for the AG without waiting for the apology that will follow it. He accused us of putting the party's interests before the nation's and of exploiting the country's difficulties to inconvenience the Socialist government. He dealt in more than generalities. He cited a grave charge to support his views. He said we have encouraged the people to grumble against the blessings which the benevolent Socialists have bestowed upon us. If that were true, it would be very grave, but like most of the things the AG says, it's not.

No political party in this country is fully unified in its position on this difficult bill [and Labour and the Liberals are misrepresenting how difficult this is by claiming each party is totally unified against conscription]. [The Tory Party is not the evil boogeyman Labour's Attorney General claims it is].

2 If we were to think only of our party's interest, what an amazing opportunity tonight would be for us. If we chose to oppose this bill we wouldn't simply be causing some petty annoyance to the party opposite. It would be a "first-class parliamentary defeat," and I'd be seeing a lot of my colleagues in this House for the last time. No doubt the Chancellor of the Exchequer will go to the Lobby tonight with a song in his heart, but as he looks at his followers who will soon be no more, the song might be "will you not come back again?" What the AG has said about us is going to be proven wrong on Tuesday. That is very quick to disprove a statement by the AG, and I hope when I see him tonight at the Lobby, he will favour us with a felicitous apology, which he has become so known for.

If the Conservative Party was going to act only in its interest, it would happily vote down this bill.

3 We're going to take, politically, the hard course tonight. We will divide on this bill because we think it's in the country's interest, and most of us will support it. This isn't a pleasant decision for anyone. No one from any party can like conscription in peacetime or its consequences. At best, it has been described by a Labour MP as a reluctant necessity.

As Conservatives, we're not taking the easy political road: we'll vote on this issue and most will support conscription because we believe it's in the country's interest.

4 I was very interested in Mr. Wigg's speech. I listened to it and then read it, and though he supported the bill, most of his speech was a condemnation of Conservatives for supporting it and Liberals for opposing it. His primary complaint was that he says we've favored conscription for 40 years. Even if that's right, I don't see why that makes it wrong for us to vote for it. There's nothing wrong with sticking to an opinion. But Mr. Wigg has only been here for a short time and he may have been misled by his experiences. It has only recently been shameful to maintain one's pre-

election positions post-election. There are many respectable precedents of doing the same thing pre- and post-election.

The Conservative Party has not supported conscription for 40 years, and those who claim this are painting a biased picture. [There's nothing wrong with sticking to your principles, unlike some Labour MPs, like Mr. Wigg].

5 As a matter of fact, Mr. Wigg was wrong. Conscription has not been a Conservative policy for 40 years and it has never figured in our program. Regarding the argument made by the Member for Montgomery that if it wasn't in our policies it was in our hearts, I'd say that was a dangerous argument. It's easy to make. If your opponent doesn't say what you want, you can always say he believes it in his heart of hearts. Several people can use this argument. Even though I'd never dream of doing this, it's possible to say the Liberal Party really believes conscription is necessary. I have just as much evidence for that as what Mr. Wigg charged us with. But it hasn't been in our program for 40 years. It's not something we have looked forward to, worked for, or welcome.

The Conservative Party has not supported conscription for 40 years, and those who claim this are trying to make us look like villains.

6 We recognize the hardships a policy like this will entail. We see the individual impacts, and the economic ones. We wish we could return to the time when the Liberal Party reigned—a time in which they still live—when this type of measure was unnecessary. I don't think a period of military service will do irreparable harm to a young man. It's an experience from which, as anyone here who has served knows, one can greatly benefit from. It's equally foolish to argue that there is full educational recompense for individuals in the service. Thus we support this measure tonight but we don't love it. Even though this measure will have grave consequences, the consequences of not doing it are greater still.

This policy will have individual and economic ramifications that we regret but we still need it [so I will support it]. Military service won't harm young men and might even do them some good.

7 The opposition to this bill has been fully expressed during this debate. Support has come from many different angles, but they all seem to lead to "No". I wish to say a few words on the broad principles of objection to this bill. There are those who are genuine conscientious objectors to compulsory military service. They oppose conscription in peace and war. They oppose conscription whether instituted by a Tory or Labour government; whether their position was popular or unpopular; and they have been prepared to pay a heavy political price for their opposition. We all must respect these people, even if we don't agree. I think they can only have this view because on two occasions, the majority of people in this country have taken a different view.

Even if we don't agree with them, we must respect those MPs who oppose conscription no matter the situation or electoral consequences; these are genuine conscientious objectors.

8 I understand their view, but not those who think compulsory service is morally right in war but morally wrong in peace. I can see the difference between these two. I can see that the burden is far more onerous during peace and the reasons for it less obvious, and the alternative course seems more possible and promising. But I cannot see the ethical difference between the two. I can't see how it's right to do it if it's too late [to avoid war] and wrong to do it if it's done in time to avert war. *I do not support the view that conscription is morally right in war but morally wrong in peace; there is no discernible ethical difference.*

9 Another group objects to conscription because they do not wish to support a foreign policy they disagree with. Mr. Zilliacus is the most prominent holder of this view. One member tried to dissuade him from this view by noting that if [Mr. Zilliacus] became foreign secretary, he might be reminded of his current attitude. That was a largely ineffective argument because he knows that opportunities of reminding Ministers of past inconvenient statements are limited and the results

discouraging. I regard his doctrine as dangerous. If you oppose conscription because you disagree with the government's foreign policy, why stop there? Why not oppose all armed forces? Such a policy would be more logical and no more dangerous because there's only one thing worse than a bad foreign policy and that's a bad foreign policy that's weakly supported. The first could lead to war; the second surely to defeat. I will say no more about this type of objector. Mr. Crossman criticized them enough. Mr. Zilliacus and the Member for East Coventry have recently been very politically close. It seems to us that the Member for East Coventry [Crossman] has recently moved sharply rightward.

I also do not agree with those who refuse to support this bill because they dislike the government's foreign policy. It's dangerous to have a bad foreign policy with a weak army as this will lead to defeat in any conflict.

10 Now I come to the third class of opponents, for whom I have much sympathy. They are prepared to accept it—even if they don't like it—if they think it's necessary, and if they are shown the reasons for it are reasonable, and that this is the only way to get the numbers required. This group, which is most of us, are entitled to answers to some important questions. We are entitled to know the strategic requirements of this country. We are entitled to know how manpower, weapons, and the latest technological advances affect those requirements. We are entitled to know whether other means to get the troops have been fully exploited, and whether conscription will give us the numbers and type of force we need.

I do agree with those that will support this bill if they think it necessary, even if they don't like it. We are entitled to answers to some important questions that will help them decide if it's necessary [and the government hasn't been forthcoming with these answers].

11 Those are important questions that deserve a detailed answer. We complain that this debate has been structured so we won't get these answers until the 11th hour tonight. Mr. Isaacs opened this debate and he admirably explained the bill. I disagree with my friend who said Mr. Isaacs was reading his speech. On several occasions he lifted his head, and I must warn him that if he keeps doing this, many of his conventional colleagues will view him as a "scab."

The government has purposefully made it difficult for us to get answers to these critical questions.

12 I'm sure Mr. Isaacs won't pretend that he dealt with these questions during his speech, and which have been asked in 9/10ths of the speeches made. His contribution had to be made, and he clearly explained some important points. He addressed conscientious objectors, claims for reinstatement, and the procedures for postponement, but our support/opposition to this bill doesn't rest on these types of questions. Most, if they're convinced by the necessity for this bill, could accept a bill like this; what is really needed is an authoritative statement on the questions which are agitating the House. Only a few people have discussed the bill's higher strategic importance. It was a plucky exchange, but no substitute for the type of argument this House is entitled to.

The government has not provided us with the answers to the questions that are agitating this House, particularly about its strategic importance.

13 I wish the MOD had opened the debate. Recently, I heard him speaking about finance, and thought he should stick to defense. Because I was sick, I couldn't listen to his speech last week on defense but I read it and now think I was wrong [he's not good on defense either]. He could've given us some lead. He could've gotten from the same organization a judgment on our military future. To this side, this would've been new. He's been making the same speech and though reports of these gatherings are as accurate and more prompt than the Official Record, they are not as detailed, and much of what he said would've been interesting to us.

Again, the government has not provided us with the answers to the questions that are agitating this House.

14 But even if the MOD couldn't open this debate—if he feels he must lead his troops from the rear—couldn't a defense minister have participated earlier? They have occasionally been in the House. Yet not one of "Alexander's Ragtime Band" has spoken. There is one point on which one, the Secretary of State for Air, could've spoken authoritatively. Much apprehension has been expressed over the compatibility of conscription with our UN obligations. This person is a great expert on the UN. He was an expert of the League too, and already on the UN; it would have been an authoritative pronouncement had he said supporting this bill wasn't inconsistent with support of the UN.

Important Labour Ministers have ducked their responsibility to speak to us and give us important information [Labour MPs are shirking their responsibilities and not discussing critical questions, like whether this bill is contrary to our UN obligations].

15 We might've had the Secretary of State for War, who is a recent conscription supporter. An account of his conversion process would've been acceptable to the House. He could've told us what hard facts changed his opinion [changed him from Bourbon of Blackpool to Moltke of Whitehall]. Interruption. I accept what you say and apologize to the House for being misled by a perfect extract of his speech. He basically said the Labour Party and trade unions would never accept the continuation of conscription because it lowers wages and labor conditions. Interruption. I let the House decide. I thought the government already had a temporary extension, and that prolonging it for this bill wasn't a change of policy. Apparently I'm wrong and this was the policy put forth and accepted by Labour at the Conference at Blackpool. Thus I apologize unreservedly to you.

Some Labour MPs now support conscription but won't share with us the reasons why [the Labour Party is being cagey about the reasons we need conscription]. [Some Labour MPs are flip-floppers].

16 I want to ask the MOD some specific questions, hoping he answers them when he closes the debate. The first is on our strategic commitments and how many troops we need for them. Normally, I wouldn't doubt the numbers would be justified by our commitments. But me and many others question the effect of new weapons on our defense requirements. We've been told that our current services are as inadequate as the archers and pikemen of the past. We are entitled to more information about this from the Government. I believe that new weapons do not abolish old requirements for defense. I was told, before the last war, that air power made the army useless, and that armored vehicles eliminated the need for infantry. Neither were true. It just means their roles are altered.

The government has not told us how new military technology changes our defense/troop needs [the Labour government isn't giving us all the information we need to make an informed decision]. [The government's argument that our current military isn't adequate isn't credible].

17 Members can't be asked to decide this for themselves on the scanty information they can get. The government should be prepared to give the frankest information on this subject. We see the necessity for some restraint on this issue, but there is a danger of too much secrecy, which leaves an impression not that there is a plan that must be kept secret, but "a failure to think out the implications of the new weapons."

Again, the Labour government is withholding important information we need to make the right decision.

18 I agree with many Members from the other side that it is possible we can get these numbers [troops] voluntarily. It has been said we should make the army more attractive, but not how much more attractive we must make it before we get the desired results. To expect we can get the numbers the Government says are required voluntarily is wishful thinking. We're very concerned that though conscription might give us the numbers we need, it might not give us "exactly what we want for defense." Mere numbers are not a satisfactory defense.

Again, the Labour government is withholding important information we need to make the right decision. [We need more than just more troops to guarantee a strong defense].

19 The main object of this policy is to get adequate future reserves. I was in the War Office in the early days of WWII and agree that, under the conditions of modern warfare, our prewar Territorial training isn't enough to get fully trained reserves. I'm not saying it's impossible for all tasks, but the amount of time men can take from their occupations doesn't give them a chance to learn the "intricacies of modern technique." Thus we must supplement the prewar Territorial Army.
We need conscription so that we can get adequately trained reserves.

20 Interruption. I won't compare our soldiers to French ones. This is irrelevant anyway because the militia was only started 2 months before the war began. What I'm discussing is whether a committed force that existed for many years could've been ready for the outbreak of war. As I said, a new system must be found to supplement the Territorial Army. The advantages of the proposed system are obvious. With 1.5 years of training and then upkeep training after that, he will be a fully trained reservist. But this depends on whether the basic and upkeep training are in the same arm of the service. Can we be assured this? Take the case of anti-aircraft defense. Are the anti-aircraft gunners in the reserve the same people who trained in the army for 1.5 years in anti-aircraft gunnery? Unless they are, this proposed system has few advantages.
Conscription will get us the reservists we need, but we still have some important questions about training that need answering [and the government hasn't yet answered them].

21 I would ask the right Hon. Gentleman [MOD] to give us an assurance that proper use is being made of the manpower we have. Unless they are, we're reluctant to give them more in future. We have all heard stories of wasted time by those currently in the services. Right or wrong, these stories have raised concern and this concern must be put to rest. Yesterday Mr. Churchill suggested one way. He suggested a parliamentary committee. What do you think about that? If he doesn't think he can accept this, what alternative can he offer?
The government must confirm we're using our existing manpower as effectively as possible, otherwise we won't vote for you in future. [I'm not convinced Labour is running the military correctly].

22 During the committee stage, we'll deal with many details of this bill. We will want to know whether we'll need some "tapering off" at the end, just as there is for pre-bill conscription, to get fairness. Finally, we'll also want to know about the opportunities men will have to qualify for commissions once they're in the reserve. These and other questions have already been raised by members on both sides during this debate and we're entitled to expect answers. Expect perhaps is wrong word as it implies confidence; we hope to get answers.
Critical questions about this bill have been raised and we're entitled to answers [which the government hasn't yet given].

23 I think we're entitled to have the information. We're prepared to support this bill, but we need all the information the Government used to come to its conclusions. These matters are too important to be decided by Ministerial command, or by personal investigation by members. We must have the fullest information and thus I hope the MOD will break his policy of "wordy silence" and give us all the facts so we can go into the Lobby knowing we are right.
Conservatives are prepared to support this bill but we need more information from the Labour government [which the government hasn't yet given].

3. Summaries coded for reasons and chains

(Connector types in parentheses; reasons used only once lined through)

Stanley (Conservative)

Claim: support the bill

Par 01 No political party in this country is fully unified in its position on this difficult bill [and Labour and the Liberals are misrepresenting how difficult this is by claiming each party is totally unified against conscription]. [The Tory Party is not the evil boogeyman Labour's Attorney General claims it is].

Reason 121: Opponents are playing politics (O)

Reason 14: Conservatives are not bad guys (I)

Par 02 If the Conservative Party was going to act only in its interest, it would happily vote down this bill.

Reason 14: Conservatives are not bad guys (I)

[Reason 84: Good for the nation] (C)

Par 03 As Conservatives, we're not taking the easy political road: we'll vote on this issue and most will support conscription because we believe it's in the country's interest.

Reason 14: Conservatives are not bad guys (I)

Reason 84: Good for the nation (C)

Reason 4: Conscription is a military necessity now (C)

Chain: 84-C-4

Par 04 The Conservative Party has not supported conscription for 40 years, and those who claim this are painting a biased picture. [There's nothing wrong with sticking to your principles, unlike some Labour MPs, like Mr. Wigg].

Reason 105: Conscription is NOT a fundamentally Conservative idea (I)

Par 05 The Conservative Party has not supported conscription for 40 years, and those who claim this are trying to make us look like villains.

Reason 105: Conscription is NOT a fundamentally Conservative idea (I)

Reason 14: Conservatives are not bad guys (I)

Reason 121: Opponents are playing politics (O)

Par 06 This policy will have individual and economic ramifications that we regret but we still need it [so I will support it]. Military service won't harm young men and might even do them some good.

~~Reason 260: Even though this bill will have negative repercussions, we still need it (E)~~

Reason 4: Conscription is a military necessity now (L)

~~Reason 114: The military life will be good for men (C)~~

~~Chain: 260-L-4~~

Par 07 Even if we don't agree with them, we must respect those MPs who oppose conscription no matter the situation or electoral consequences; these are genuine conscientious objectors.

~~Reason 1: Opposition doesn't understand military reality (O)~~

Par 08 I do not support the view that conscription is morally right in war but morally wrong in peace; there is no discernible ethical difference.

~~Reason 186: Opponents are being inconsistent (O)~~

Par 09 I also do not agree with those who refuse to support this bill because they dislike the government's foreign policy. It's dangerous to have a bad foreign policy with a weak army as this will lead to defeat in any conflict.

~~Reason 202: Opposing conscription because you don't like the government's foreign policy is invalid (O)~~

[Reason 67: We need well-trained army and reserves] (L)

Reason 4: Conscription is a military necessity now (L)

Chain: 4-L-67

Par 10 I do agree with those that will support this bill if they think it necessary, even if they don't like it. We are entitled to answers to some important questions that will help them decide if it's necessary [and the government hasn't been forthcoming with these answers].

N/A

Par 11 The government has purposefully made it difficult for us to get answers to these critical questions.

N/A

Par 12 The government has not provided us with the answers to the questions that are agitating this House, particularly about its strategic importance.

N/A

Par 13 Again, the government has not provided us with the answers to the questions that are agitating this House.

N/A

Par 14 Important Labour Ministers have ducked their responsibility to speak to us and give us important information [Labour MPs are shirking their responsibilities and not discussing critical questions, like whether this bill is contrary to our UN obligations].

N/A

Par 15 Some Labour MPs now support conscription but won't share with us the reasons why [the Labour Party is being cagey about the reasons we need conscription]. [Some Labour MPs are flip-floppers].

N/A

Par 16 The government has not told us how new military technology changes our defense/troop needs [the Labour government isn't giving us all the information we need to make an informed decision]. [The government's argument that our current military isn't adequate isn't credible].

~~Reason 12: We need more troops (L)~~

~~Reason 261: New military threats/technology doesn't make army obsolete (L)~~

~~Chain: 12-L-261~~

Par 17 Again, the Labour government is withholding important information we need to make the right decision.

N/A

Par 18 Again, the Labour government is withholding important information we need to make the right decision. [We need more than just more troops to guarantee a strong defense].

N/A

Par 19 We need conscription so that we can get adequately trained reserves.

Reason 67: We need well-trained army and reserves (L)

Par 20 Conscription will get us the reservists we need, but we still have some important questions about training that need answering [and the government hasn't yet answered them].

N/A

Par 21 The government must confirm we're using our existing manpower as effectively as possible, otherwise we won't vote for you in future. [I'm not convinced Labour is running the military correctly].

N/A

Par 22 Critical questions about this bill have been raised and we're entitled to answers [which the government hasn't yet given].

N/A

Par 23 Conservatives are prepared to support this bill but we need more information from the Labour government [which the government hasn't yet given].

N/A

Claim: support the bill

Retained chains:

84-4

4-67