



The Archbishop of Canterbury last night tabled a further amendment to the Illegal Migration Bill, calling on the Government to adopt a long-term strategy to tackle the refugee crisis and human trafficking.

**Read the Archbishop's speech as delivered:**

Immigration and asylum, as the long series of debates on this Bill has shown, is an extraordinarily divisive issue. Speaking as someone who has been deeply embedded in East Kent for more than a decade now, I know from experience the extent to which communities are divided and individuals are torn between their desire to do what they know is right and care for those arriving, and their apprehension about the impact on local communities. One understands both those feelings very well.

When this amendment was tabled in its previous form last week, it produced considerable reconciliation and unity across the House. It was agreed that this is a massive, international issue on a generational basis and that tackling it needs profound thinking on a long-term basis. Legislation and strategy must be fitted to the problem, not the problem to the legislation. That is not how it works.

For some things we do not debate strategy, or have strategy on the face of a Bill. But it is impossible to imagine that we can solve a problem of this kind by taking short-term view after short-term view. It is essential that the solutions, as we go forward, bring together the whole of politics, all sides of both Houses, and unite our country instead of using this as a wedge issue to divide things.

This is a moment of reconciliation and an opportunity for profound long-term thought. This happens with climate change, on which there is legislation about 2050, never mind 10 years' time; it happens with defence, where documents are produced that look at our proposals out to 2030; it happens with spending plans, where we have three-year committed views on spending because we know that you cannot do it in 12-month sections.

Secondly, this provides accountability. I could not agree more that a legislature is not operational, but it is the place in which the operational Executive is held to account, never mind which party it is. That will be as inconvenient to any other party in government as it is to the current party and there will be moments, if another party is in government, when it will not like it. That is the nature of our constitution.

This provides for accountability; Ministers and Secretaries of State must come to both Houses and allow their view of the world to be tested, challenged, informed and improved.

Thirdly, it enables flexibility. The strategy shifts and changes as circumstances shift and change. Most of your Lordships will know Keynes's remark:

"When the facts change, I change my mind. What do you do?"

Of course we will need to change our mind as time goes on—if the boats are stopped, if new threats emerge to do with migration and if there are new issues.

The 10-year strategy will enable the whole country, united, to understand where we are going, what the sacrifices are and how they will be mitigated. This is not a party-political issue but one in which we must work together: if we work separately, we will fall separately.

Finally, it puts us back into leadership globally. Without leadership, we cannot lead as this country should do and as we have so often shown we can. This is an international issue. We have enormous clout. It does not involve only the UNHCR, who I think are among the most extraordinary people I meet, but so many other groups. We need to see how that leadership is being exercised.

If this Motion passes this evening or if I have eloquently persuaded the Minister to stand up and say that he has changed his mind—I am not that hopeful—there are, of course, other ways of doing it.

Before we come back for the next bit of ping-pong, I would be very happy and open to talk about alternative, but solid and dependable, ways of achieving the same ends for our country: reconciliation over this issue, accountability for this and future governments, flexibility in strategy, and leadership in the world. There may be other ways, and I am very open to those. I beg to move.

Read the amendment in full here: [Illegal Migration Bill - Hansard - UK Parliament](#)

4 min read

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