

~ Case Study ~

UKYP and the House of Commons The Transport debate



I'm Siobhan Brasier and I'm 16 years old, I go to Cirencester College. I'm a Gloucestershire MYP, who made history as part of the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) by debating in the House of Commons. The UKYP was founded in 1999, and is non party political. The UKYP aims to represent the views of young people aged 11-18 and I spoke on their behalf about Transport.

The Day Friday 30th October 2009

How many times can someone say they have made history? Well, I am 16 years old, and I can, along with around 300 other young people in the Youth Parliament say we are the first non- MPs who were allowed to sit and debate in the House of Commons since Charles 1st .

The day started with a bang and the atmosphere as we entered the historic hall in Westminster was amazing - there were cameras, film crew, and people there to see us. I was so excited.

A year ago before I became a member of youth parliament, (MYP) I was this normal girl from Cirencester who did not really care what was happening in politics, but now, because of UK Youth Parliament I am part of the history books. It is definitely something to tell the grandchildren.

I had never before been so nervous, yet excited! When going into the Commons chamber I met Harriet Harman and felt so privileged when she shook my hand and gave me advice on how to give my speech. To find out I had sat in the seats of both David Cameron and Gordon Brown made my day even better.

My fellow MYP of Gloucestershire, Chelsey Walsh said the day was “overwhelming, incredible and a truly amazing experience”.

Never before had I been in a place with so many atmospheres. Chelsey described the chamber and hall as “buzzing” when everyone was waiting, and an event “that none of us will forget in a hurry”. To be honest, I think this was the best way to describe it.



I felt privileged to be a part of such an amazing and historic event. Before I spoke I was so nervous, my heart rate sped up and I just kept thinking how amazing everyone else was, worrying about my own speech.

Everyone was so supportive and lovely to one another and this was apparent throughout the chamber. We are young people who care and want to make a difference, which according to Government, general public and media is a rarity. Maybe it is, but for that day on Friday I felt proud to be a young person.

The Speaker, John Bercow, helped with the atmosphere and in making the day amazing-- he really is an inspiration in my eyes. After my speech though, I was shaking and had such an adrenalin rush.

Just to hear The Speaker talk about my speech in such a positive way is something I am never going to forget. The UK Youth Parliament has changed my life completely and speaking in the House of Commons last Friday is definitely my biggest success so far, and is going to be pretty hard to beat.

Transport

The issue that I spoke about was public transport, and why young people and over 60's should both be entitled to it free. When I had finished the speaker said it was a very passionate speech. Public Transport has always been an issue that's always annoyed me and made me keen to do something about. The fact that the debate was broadcast and that anyone could (and many did) watch it was a strange, yet fantastic experience. It was really inspiring that so many of my friends and family watched it. But also people I didn't know from college and stuff saw me and said they thought it was amazing of youth parliament.

My prepared speech *(the blue italics are where I planned to refer to quotes from other MYP's speeches they used during the debate)*

Today we have heard the reasons, for and against, why young people should be entitled to free public transport.

That is not to say someone aged 60 or above shouldn't be entitled to free transport too.

As the MYP for? said, “ “

Young and old people both have similar reasons for requiring free transport, such as:

- a limited income;
- many older people can no longer drive and young people can't if they are under 17; and
- isolation affects everyone in rural areas, the young and old alike.

So public transport is the only way to get places inaccessible by foot, or that are situated many miles away from rural communities; places such as the library, the swimming pool, the cinema – facilities that are of shared interest to all age groups, and regularly available to those of us who live in large towns or cities.

As we heard from the MYP for? “Insert a quote for a young person's argument in the chamber about distances they have to travel to get to anywhere, or an example of their journey”

Yet the government, the general public and the media continue to complain about young people on street corners, just hanging around. This is not a new problem, but we do know the answer in the form of regular and accessible youth work provision, facilities that are open at a time that young people can access them and with free public transport so that young people can get to them, it would help get young people off the streets and sort the problem out! In answer to my colleague's statement, “what have young people done to deserve free transport?” Maybe young people aren't able to volunteer or help because they cannot access the transport to get to where their time and skills would be of use!

However, the problem is not just free time, many young people still have to pay for school buses, particularly to attend Higher Education, and the prices are high and it's unfair. If a young person wants to go to a different college other than their local one then they don't get free transport if the local college offers the same courses. A lack of free public transport here is clearly having an effect on the types of skills that young people are then able to acquire.

So today in this Chamber the young people of the UK are calling on the Government to provide access to public transport and facilities to young people on an equal basis. Why should young people in London be entitled to a free Oyster Card, when young people in Cumbria are not? Why should a young person in West Sussex be able to access a concessionary fare scheme for the buses in the County when young people in*?example from another young persons speech?* cannot.

And why when the problems faced by young and old people are so similar, should people over the age of 60 be given free transport, when we are not? I ask this House whether the real reason for the disparity in the provision of free public transport is simply down to the fact that to give it to young people would not win any party any votes, but whereas to give it to the older generation does?

The TV Documentary

As well as being the South West debate lead, I was asked to be part of a programme called "democracy in action", to be shown on BBC sometime in 2010. I did this with another MYP, Jonny Gilchrist, where throughout the day we were followed by a camera crew. We were asked various questions about how we were feeling, political stuff and just how we thought the day was going. At first I was really worried about doing it, because I knew nothing about politics, well at least I thought I didn't, because on the day I could answer every question, so I was really pleased with myself".

"All in all it was a great day, and House of Commons debate 2009, may have got into the history book, but I also know, it's definitely my most achieved thing with UKYP"



Siobhan Brasier, MYP, Gloucestershire