

PARLIAMENT

House of Commons

Monday, 20 May 1805

Mr. Creevey¹ moved for an account of the salaries of the Judge Marshall and other officers of the Court of Admiralty. The motion was negatived, in consequence of Sir William Scott² having explained that he derived no salary from sitting in the Court of Appeal.

Tuesday, 21 May 1805

Sergeant Best³ gave notice that on Monday he should ask leave for a bill to amend the Act of George II relating to the privileges of Members in respect to their personal debts.

Sir J. Newport⁴ moved for an account of the expenditure of sums granted for secret services in Ireland from 1793 to 1804, with certain exceptions. On a division there were: ayes, 47; noes, 93.

Wednesday, 22 May 1805

On the motion of Lord Glenbervie,⁵ an address was ordered for a statement of the proceedings of the Commissioners for the Sale and Redemption of the Land Tax.

Mr. Bernard⁶ made a motion for a Committee to inquire into the state of the tolls on the Grand Canal in Ireland. Agreed to.

In a committee of supply, several sums were voted for canal navigations, and for the expenses of the House in stationary, etc.

Thursday, 23 May 1805

Sergeant Best called the attention of the House to the facts disclosed in the Eleventh Report of the Naval Commissioners, and spoke as to the propriety of an inquiry previous to any ultimate decision. The facts in this report proved, in his mind, that some gross abuses had been committed, and that scarcely any law had passed for the security of our constitution on these points which had not been violated. It therefore became highly necessary to ascertain whether loans can be raised from the people by the Ministers without the consent of Parliament consistently with the principles of the British Constitution; because scarcely a session of Parliament passes without votes enabling the Minister to raise loans upon Exchequer Bills; and if it be the law of the Constitution that loans cannot be raised upon Exchequer Bills without that permission, it cannot be legal to issue Navy Bills for the purpose. He proceeded to quote passages from different writers on the Constitution; and asserted that since the year 1800, independently of the vast number of Navy Bills that have been issued in the legal way, namely, for stores and actual services; and which becoming due, instead of being paid off, were taken up by issuing other Navy Bills, as has of late been the practice at the bank, no less a sum than £4,300,000 has been raised by the issuing of Navy Bills, and of this no communication was ever made to Parliament. Commenting on other passages of the Report, he arraigned Ministers for a high violation of the laws of the Country, in a mis-application of the public money, and at length concluded with moving "that a select committee be appointed to take into consideration the Eleventh Report."

The Chancellor of the Exchequer¹ expressed himself anxious for the proposed inquiry; and intimated that the mover was totally mistaken as to the subject on which he had descanted. He, however, suggested as an

¹ Thomas Creevey (1768–1838), Whig M.P. for Thetford (1802–1806)

² Sir William Scott (1745–1836), Tory M.P. for Downton (1790–1801) and Oxford University (1801–1821), Judge of the Consistory Court (1788–1821), and Judge of the High Court of Admiralty (1798–1827)

³ William Draper Best (1767–1845), Whig M.P. for Petersfield (1802–1806)

⁴ Sir Simon John Newport (1756–1843), Whig M.P. for Waterford (1802–1832)

⁵ Sylvester Douglas (1743–1823), Baron Glenbervie, Tory M.P. for Fowey (1795–1796), Midhurst (1796–1800), Plympton Erle (1801–1802), and Hastings (1802–1806)

⁶ Scrope Bernard (1758–1830), M.P. for Aylesbury (1789–1806)

amendment that one part of the Report should be referred to a secret, and the other to a select, committee. He then entered upon a refutation of the charges which Sergeant Best had made against Ministers by showing that the Commissioners who had framed the Report had thought of no such charges, and had only intimated that the scheme principally alluded to in the Report was adopted with no direct view. He traced in the clearest manner the origin and purposes of Navy Bills to the time of the Revolution; and after insisting that the purposes to which they had been applied were strictly naval and regular, he moved that the application of an item of £100.000 be excluded from the investigation of the select committee.

Mr. Fox² made some observations on the necessity of examining how far the laws had been complied with, and how far they had been sacrificed to public convenience.

Sir A.S. Hamond³ observed that the Navy Board had been accused of paying bills a day sooner than they ought to have been paid. The mode pursued was exactly the same as had been followed from the beginning. It was consistent with the uniform practice. It was surprising to him that the Commissioners should have stated this matter in the manner they had. The Navy Board had taken 90 days before they issued the bills; so that instead of paying a day too soon, there was a gain of 179 days, and half of a year's interest saved by that credit, making it for six months instead of three months. There was a very considerable issue in 1797, to the amount of £7.000.000. Fifteen per cent was then paid on the bills, and the same kept increasing till the Act passed, in the year after which more than £1.000.000 was saved to the public.

The motion of Sergeant Best, with the amendment, was then agreed to.

The Bill for improving the Port of London was read a third time, and passed.

Friday, 24 May 1805

A new writ was ordered for Newton, in the room of C. Chapman,⁴ Esquire, who had accepted the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds.⁵

Monday, 27 May 1805

A new writ was ordered for the Borough of Dornock, in the room of the Right Honourable J. Villiers,⁶ who has accepted the office of Steward of the Chiltern Hundreds.

Mr. Leycester⁷ brought up a report from the select committee relative to the Tenth Report of the Naval Commissioners, and moved that it be printed.

Mr. Whitbread⁸ immediately gave notice of a motion for the impeachment of Lord Melville.⁹ This motion it was his intention to follow up with certain resolutions respecting the conduct of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on several of the transactions mentioned in that Report. He named Thursday fennight.¹⁰

Sergeant Best obtained leave for a bill relative to Members of Parliament becoming bankrupts.

¹ William Pitt (1759–1806), Tory Prime Minister (1783–1801, 1804–1806), M.P. for Appleby (1781–1784) and Cambridge University (1784–1806)

² Charles James Fox (1749–1806), Whig M.P. for Midhurst (1768–1774), Malmesbury (1774–1780), Tain Burghs (1784–1785), and Westminster (1780–1784, 1785–1806) and leader of the Opposition

³ Sir Andrew Snape Hamond (1738–128), Tory M.P. for Ipswich (1796–1806) and Comptroller of the Navy Board (1794–1806)

⁴ Charles Chapman (1752–1809), Whig M.P. for Newtown, Isle of Wight (1802–1805)

⁵ Elected as servants of their constituency, Members of Parliament may not resign. However, any Member accepting an office of profit under the Crown must surrender his seat. Thus, when a Member wishes to resign, he is appointed to the ceremonial office of *Crown Steward and Bailiff of the Three Chiltern Hundreds of Stoke, Desborough, and Burnham*, thus legally vacating his seat.

⁶ John Charles Villiers (1757–1838), M.P. for Old Sarum (1784–1790), Dartmouth (1790–1802), and Tain Burghs (1802–1805), had long supported Pitt, but moved into the opposition in 1805 and was forced to surrender his seat.

⁷ Hugh Leycester (1748–1836), Tory M.P. for Milborne Port (1802–1812)

⁸ Samuel Whitbread (1764–1815), Whig M.P. for Bedford (1790–1815)

⁹ Henry Dundas (1742–1811), Viscount Melville, faced impeachment for his tenure as Treasurer of the Admiralty (1782–1800)

¹⁰ A fennight (or sennight; i.e., seven-night) equals one week

Mr. Foster¹ obtained leave to bring in a bill continuing the powers of the Commissioners employed to inquire into abuses in the public offices in Ireland.

Tuesday, 28 May 1805

Sir C. Price² obtained leave for a bill to repeal that part of the London Docks Act which grants to the car-men of London the exclusive privilege of free cartage on the quays.

Mr. R. Dundas³ (son of Lord Melville), in consequence of Mr. Whitbread's motion, intimated that he should move that his Lordship be heard in his defence on the day of the motion for impeachment.

On the motion of Sir W. Elford,⁴ the correspondence between Earl Saint Vincent,⁵ the Comptroller of the Navy, Navy, and Lord Buckinghamshire⁶ was referred to a select committee.

Colonel Craufurd⁷ wished to learn from the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether it was in his contemplation to bring forward any measure for increasing the regular army.

Mr. Pitt apprehended that Colonel Craufurd had forgotten what had recently taken place in the augmentation of the Army by the volunteering of the Militia into the Line. He was happy to state that this measure had proved eminently successful, although, from the returns not having been made up, he could not state the exact number added to the regular force. At present, therefore, he saw no occasion for submitting any motion of the kind.

Colonel Craufurd observed that augmenting the Army by volunteering from the Militia was merely a temporary supply, and could not be resorted to again without great danger. Feeling this to be the case, and the state of the regular army not what it ought to be, he should take an opportunity of submitting a motion on this subject.

A long conversation took place on the Prize Regulation Bill, in which Sir C. Pole⁸ delivered his opinion against it.

Adjourned.

Thursday, 30 May 1805

Mr. P. Moore⁹ presented a petition from several persons summoned as witnesses on the part of Mr. Mainwaring¹⁰ before the Committee on the Middlesex Election, complaining that the agents for that election refused to make them due compensation. Mr. Moore stated that a petition to the same effect had been presented to the Chairman of that Committee, about two months since, and that he had given it to the solicitor with a hope that justice would be done to the parties. The solicitor, however, had done nothing. A second petition was then offered to him to present to the House; he put it into the hands of the noble lord, and it was again referred to the solicitor, who pledged himself to Mr. Moore that justice should be done. Six weeks had now elapsed, and therefore it became his duty to offer the petition to the House, praying their interference.

¹ John Foster (1740–1828), Tory M.P. for County Louth (1801–1821)

² Sir Charles Price (1748–1818), independent Tory M.P. for London (1802–1812), Lord Mayor of London (1802–1803), and Alderman of London (1798–1818)

³ Robert Saunders Dundas (1771–1851), Tory M.P. for Hastings (1794–1796), Rye (1706–1801), and Edinburghshire (1801–1811)

⁴ Sir William Elford (1749–1837), Tory M.P. for Plymouth (1796–1806) and a bitter enemy of Saint Vincent since the 1802 election, in which Elford believed Saint Vincent had acted against him.

⁵ Admiral John Jervis (1735–1823), Earl of Saint Vincent, First Lord of the Admiralty (1801–1804). It was his investigations that uncovered the corruption for which Viscount Melville faced impeachment.

⁶ Robert Hobart (1760–1816), Earl of Buckinghamshire, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies (1801–1804)

⁷ Colonel Robert Craufurd (1764–1812), Opposition M.P. for East Retford (1802–1806)

⁸ Admiral Sir Charles Morice Pole (1757–1830), Opposition M.P. for Newark (1802–1806)

⁹ Peter Moore (1753–1828), Whig M.P. for Coventry (1803–1826)

¹⁰ William Mainwaring (1735–1821), independent M.P. for Middlesex (1784–1802). The House declared him guilty of bribery in the 1804 Middlesex election, and Mainwaring declined to run in the special election.

The Speaker¹ observed that until the object of the petition was more specifically defined, it was uncertain whether the House could interfere. If it was for compensation from the public purse, it would not be proper for the House to receive it. If for the House to interfere, in order that the party might be obliged to pay his own witnesses, it would be very proper. At present it would bear either construction. The petition was ordered to lie on the table.

Mr. Jeffery,² of Poole, moved for a return of the correspondence between the Admiralty and Navy Board from 1 January to 15 May 1804, respecting the supply of oak timber for the Navy, etc. etc. Ordered.

A debate ensued upon the question for the third reading of the Curates' Bill, which was carried in the affirmative.

Friday, 31 May 1805

Lord Ossulston³ moved for a new writ for the Borough of Shrewsbury, in the room of Sir W. Pulteney,⁴ deceased.

Sir J. Frederick⁵ brought up the Report of the Committee on the Lambeth Waterworks Bill. After some observations respecting the mode of proceeding adopted by the Committee, Mr. Tierney⁶ moved that the Report be re-committed on Wednesday next; when there appeared: ayes, 9; noes, 51—majority, 42.

Wednesday, 5 June 1805

A new writ was ordered for Forfar, in the room of Sir D. Carnegie,⁷ deceased.

Sir J. Stewart⁸ brought up the Report of the Committee to whom the subject of Sir Home Popham's⁹ conduct had been referred, which was ordered to lie on the table, and to be printed.

A petition from the Trustees of the British Museum, praying to be enabled to purchase a portion of the antiquities of the late Mr. Townley,¹⁰ valued at £20,000, was ordered to be referred to a committee.

Thursday, 6 June 1805

Sir W. Parsons¹¹ took the oaths and his seat for the King's County (Ireland).

In a committee on the Spanish Red Wine Bill, it was agreed to fix the additional duty at £12 per ton.

In a committee on the carriage of coal inland, Mr. Huskisson¹² moved that a quantity not exceeding 50,000 tons of coals be permitted to be brought into London by the Paddington Canal, upon payment of a duty similar to that which is now paid on coals brought coastwise. Agreed to.

Friday, 7 June 1805

Petition from the ship owners of North and South Shields against the Paddington Canal Bill was ordered to lie on the table.

¹ Charles Abbot (1757–1829), Speaker of the House of Commons (1802–1817)

² John Jeffery (1751–1822), Tory M.P. for Poole (1796–1809)

³ Charles Augustus Bennet (1776–1850), Lord Ossulston, Whig M.P. for Steyning (1803–1806)

⁴ Sir William Pulteney (1729–1805), independent Tory M.P. for Cromartyshire (1768–1774) and Shrewsbury (1775–1805)

⁵ Sir John Frederick (1750–1825), independent M.P. for Newport (1780–1780), Christchurch (1781–1790), and Surry (1794–1807)

⁶ George Tierney (1761–1830), Whig M.P. for Colchester (1789–1790) and Southwark (1796–1806)

⁷ Sir David Carnegie (1753–1805), independent M.P. for Aberdeen Burghs (1784–1790) and Forfarshire (1796–1805)

⁸ Sir James Stewart (1756–1827), Tory M.P. for County Donegal (1802–1818)

⁹ Sir Home Riggs Popham (1762–1820), Tory M.P. for Yarmouth, Isle of Wight (1804–1806) had been accused by the Admiralty of exorbitant repair bills while leading a naval expedition to the Red Sea in 1800.

¹⁰ Charles Townley (1733–1805), noted collector of classical sculpture

¹¹ Sir Lawrence Parsons (1758–1841), Tory M.P. for King's County (1801–1807) had been appointed to the Irish Treasury Board. As a consequence, he had to stand for re-election, which he won un-opposed, and was thus being re-sworn as the Member for King's County.

¹² William Huskisson (1770–1830), Tory M.P. for Morpeth (1796–1802) and Liskeard (1804–1807)

In a Committee of the whole House, it was ordered that a further sum of £60.000 be granted from the Consolidated Fund for the improvement of the Port of London.

Mr. Grey¹ asked a question of the Chancellor of the Exchequer relative to the alliance with Russia, in the same terms as it was put by Lord Carysfort² in the Upper House; and received a similar answer. Mr. Grey then proposed to bring forward a motion on the subject on Wednesday fennight.

The Secretary at War³ obtained leave to bring in a bill to empower His Majesty to retain upon full pay and allowances officers of militia during the war, notwithstanding any reduction of the militia.

Colonel Stanley⁴ moved that the Report of the Committee on the Petition of the Duke of Athol⁵ be taken into further consideration, which produced a very long discussion, and terminated in a majority of 66 for the motion.

A sum of £10.000, Irish, was allotted to the improvement of the Harbor of Howth, and the Report of the Committee on the Paddington Coal Bill, resolving that 50.000 tons of coal should be brought to London by that Canal, was agreed to.

Monday, 10 June 1805

Mr. Whitbread moved for several papers connected with the case of Lord Melville.

Admiral Berkeley⁶ obtained leave for a bill to suspend certain penalties on the use of peculiar kinds of machinery in the woolen manufactories.

Lord A. Hamilton⁷ obtained leave for a bill to explain and amend the Corn Act of last session.

Tuesday, 11 June 1805

This being the day appointed for Mr. Whitbread to move the impeachment in the House of Commons against Lord Viscount Melville, after some private business had been transacted, the Speaker informed the House that he had just received a letter, signed MELVILLE, dated Wimbledon, 11 June, which he read, and was as follows:

Sir,

Having observed from the votes of the House of Commons that a Select Committee has been appointed to consider the matters contained in the Tenth Report, and having obtained a copy of the report of that Committee, I now take the liberty of requesting to be admitted into the House of Commons, in order to have an opportunity of speaking in my own vindication.

Mr. R.S. Dundas (son of Viscount Melville) then rose and said that understanding there would be no opposition to the motion he was about to submit, he should detain the House no longer than by moving "That Lord Viscount Melville be now admitted, and heard;" which being agreed to, *nemine contradicente*,⁸ the Speaker ordered the Sergeant to take the Mace and acquaint Lord Viscount Melville that he may come in.

The Sergeant accordingly introduced Lord Melville in the customary manner, who was attended by his son and Mr. Charles Dundas. Having made his obeisance to the Chair, Mr. Speaker informed his Lordship that there was a chair for him to repose in, if he thought fit.

¹ Charles Grey (1764–1845), Whig M.P. for Northumberland (1786–1807)

² John Joshua Proby (1751–1838), Earl of Carysfort (Ireland) and Baron Carysfort (UK); a prominent Whig politician, on 7 June 1805 in the House of Lords, he inquired "in what state the negotiation between this country and Russia stood?" Lord Mulgrave replied "that we was not at present authorized to inform his lordship on that point." (*The Parliamentary Register or an Impartial Report of the Debates that have occurred in the two Houses of Parliament, in the course of the Third Session of the Second Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland*, page 135)

³ John Jeffreys Pratt (1759–1840), Secretary of State for War and the Colonies (1804–1805)

⁴ Thomas Stanley (1749–1816), independent Tory M.P. for Lancashire (1780–1812)

⁵ The previous Duke of Athol sold the sovereignty of the Isle of Man to the Crown in 1765, in return for financial considerations. John Murray (1755–1830), Duke of Athol, repeatedly petitioned Parliament to clarify the rights transferred and those retained.

⁶ Vice-Admiral George Canfield Berkeley (1753–1810), Tory M.P. for Gloucestershire (1783–1810)

⁷ Alexander Hamilton (1767–1852), Whig M.P. for Lancaster (1802–1806) and son of the Duke of Hamilton

⁸ without objection; unanimously

The chair was on the left side, just within the bar, on which his Lordship seated himself for about a minute, with his hat on, after which he rose, uncovered, to address the House. He first laid his hat in the chair, then drew some papers from his pocket and laid them on it. His Lordship then began a speech that lasted two hours and a quarter.

He began by lamenting that he had repeatedly tried, in vain, to obtain a hearing on the subject matter of the accusations; but that, as an opportunity was now offered, he would, notwithstanding the restrictions with which he was bound by the orders of the House of Peers, offer such explanations of his conduct on the Tenth Report of the Commissioners of Naval Inquiry as appeared to him requisite. Lord Melville then, positively and unequivocally, denied any participation with Mr. Trotter¹ in his supposed profits by the application of public monies for private purposes.

He then reviewed the particulars of the charges against him, so far as regarded Mr. Trotter's statement of accounts against him; assured the House that he had never seen such accounts till presented to him in the Tenth Report; that he had applied to Mr. Trotter in vain for a fair and plain statement of accounts; that he was always given to understand that Mr. Trotter had so blended his public with his private accounts as to be unable to satisfy him with any separate account individually; that all the accounts which existed were those from the books of Messrs. Coutts,² in which everything was mixed and confounded as here described; that any other account was furnished from the mere memory of Mr. Trotter; and that his lordship was consequently left at the mercy of Mr. Trotter's recollection.

With regard to the Instrument of Release,³ about which so much had been said, Lord Melville declared that he was totally ignorant of the purport of it; that he never gave any instructions for that instrument; that he was 400 miles distant from the place where it was planned and concerted by Mr. Trotter; that although Mr. Spottiswoode, who drew it at Mr. Trotter's desire, was dead, yet his son, who was privy to the transaction, positively affirms in his evidence that it was drawn by Mr. Trotter's instructions alone, and that Lord Melville knew nothing about it till sent to him for his signature; that believing it to be a common and simple release, such as is frequently in use, and an instrument of little consequence, he had called two of his menial servants to witness it; that an agreement of such a nature, for the burning and destroying of vouchers, was an absurdity in the extreme; that if it had been an instrument to conceal foul deeds, it would hardly have been allowed to be registered in the Books of the Court of Session in Scotland.

Upon the subject of the £10,000 and other sums of the public money received by him and not applied to Naval purposes, but disbursed in the management of the affairs of Scotland, his lordship positively declared that "private honor and personal convenience" must prevent him from ever giving any account of them.

It had been asserted that he had borrowed £20,000 from Mr. Trotter, not subject to the payment of interest. He declared he did not know that the sum, at the time, had been advanced by Mr. Trotter; and as there was a running account between them, as his private agent, he supposed the interest was provided for. He had borrowed a sum to subscribe to the Loyalty Loan because it was expected that every man in office should take a part of it. He wished, however, to get rid of it; and after he had paid the first installment at a discount, he directed that his share should be disposed of by Messrs. Coutts. His lordship, in explanation of the affair of Mr. Jellicoe,⁴ took no blame to himself (Mr. Jellicoe's defalcation being prior to his coming into office.)

¹ Alexander Trotter (1755–1842), Naval Paymaster and close personal friend of Lord Melville. Trotter transferred Navy money to his own bank account. He made all Naval payments as they became due, but invested to his personal profit all money not immediately demanded for the Navy's use. On 10 April 1805, the House of Commons, by a vote of 217–216, censured Melville for complicity. Samuel Whitbread then moved that "instructions be given to the Attorney-General to proceed legally against Lord Melville and Mr. Trotter."

² Thomas Coutts ran the bank in which Trotter deposited his money

³ In February 1803 Melville signed a document, drawn up by Trotter, discharging Trotter's debt to Melville of £1580 and agreeing to "mutually deliver up to each other, or... to cancel and destroy all the vouchers or other memorandums and writings that at any time heretofore may have existed, passed, or been interchanged between them relative to the said accounts..."

⁴ Adam Jellicoe (1726–1789), Deputy Paymaster, embezzled more than £36,500 from the Navy

His lordship concluded by making a very pathetic appeal to the feelings of the House; represented the punishment of mind he had already suffered and the wounds inflicted upon the feelings of his friends and relatives by the charges brought against him, charges which he hoped would be fully controverted before he died. But if he should descend to the grave without the opportunity of wiping off the calumnies heaped upon him, he trusted posterity, when it should become acquainted with his innocence, would do that justice to his character which was at present involved in accusation. He would not believe, he said, that an impeachment was gravely meditated upon, nor that even a civil process was intended to be prosecuted, as in either case he should imagine speeches would not have been delivered in Palace yard and elsewhere, calculated to poison the sources of justice, to inflame the public mind against him, and to pervert every principle of a fair trial. There were other reasons why he could not believe the rumor of an intended impeachment, as it was a proceeding which, he thought, after what had already passed, could neither be entertained nor wished by the people at large, nor by the representatives of the people.

His lordship having concluded, withdrew from the House; when Mr. Whitbread rose, and spoke at length in reply to Lord Viscount Melville, and the matters in charge against his lordship, observing that his defense, in his opinion, fell short of anything that could diminish the grounds of accusation against him. On the contrary, he had furnished fresh topics for presuming criminality, and had given fresh lights where he had supposed nothing further could have been furnished. And it was his firm belief that the Committee and the Country were not yet acquainted with anything like the whole of the gross malversations which would hereafter be proved. Therefore the House must proceed, if they wished to preserve their dignity and character for justice, and put his lordship upon the proof of his guilt or innocence. He meant to accuse his lordship upon three distinct heads: first, that he has connived at a direct violation of the law, and thereby been guilty of a high breach of his duty; secondly, he should charge him with a participation of profits arising from the abuse of the public money; and, thirdly, that he procured, under false pretences, certain sums of money from the public purse for the application of which he could produce no voucher, etc., the same being burnt and destroyed by express agreement and contrivance. Mr. Whitbread then went into a review of the matters contained in the Tenth Report and called upon the House, as the Grand Inquest of the Country, to find a bill by which Lord Melville might be put upon his trial, and his guilt or innocence established; and concluded by moving "That Henry Lord Viscount Melville be impeached for high crimes and misdemeanors."

Mr. Bond¹ moved, as an amendment, that after the word "that" all the rest be omitted, and the following words substituted in their place:

That the Attorney-General² be directed to commence a criminal prosecution against Henry Lord Viscount Melville for the several offences which appear, from the said Report, to have been committed by the said Henry Lord Viscount Melville; and that the Attorney-General be also directed to stay the proceedings in the civil suit instituted against the said Henry Lord Viscount Melville, respecting matters disclosed in the said Tenth Report.

The Master of the Rolls³ objected both to the original motion and the amendment upon the ground that nothing new had occurred before the Select Committee, with the exception of the release, and that he thought of too trifling a nature to make any alteration in the former mode of proceeding necessary.

Lord Temple,⁴ Mr. Hiley Addington,⁵ Mr. Pytches,¹ Mr. Somers Cocks,² and Lord Henry Petty³ supported the Impeachment.

¹ Nathaniel Bond (1754–1823), independent Tory M.P. for Corfe Castle (1801–1807)

² Spencer Perceval (1762–1812), Attorney-General of England (1802–1806) and Tory M.P. for Northampton (1796–1812)

³ Sir William Grant (1752–1832), Solicitor-General (1799–1801), Master of the Rolls (1801–1817), and Tory M.P. for Shaftesbury (1790–1792), New Windsor (1794–1796), and Banffshire (1796–1812). The Master of the Rolls is the second most senior judge in England.

⁴ Nugent Greville Temple (1776–1839), independent Tory M.P. for Buckinghamshire (1797–1813)

⁵ John Hiley Addington (1759–1818), independent Tory M.P. for Truro (1787–1790), Winchelsea (1794–1796), Wendover (1796–1802), Bossiney (1802), and Harwich (1803–1818)

Mr. Hawkins Browne,⁴ Mr. Alexander,⁵ and Mr. Cartwright⁶ were against any further proceedings.

It being three o'clock on Wednesday morning, and not likely to come to any conclusion, the House adjourned till the afternoon.

Wednesday, 12 June 1805

The above debate was resumed.

Mr. Wilberforce,⁷ in a speech of some length, said he was concerned to hear Lord Viscount Melville assert that he would render no account to Parliament, or any other person whatever, relative to the £10,000 and other sums of money. Such a declaration, in his mind, could have proceeded from nothing but a consciousness of guilt. If such a doctrine was once to be admitted, there was an end of the British Constitution; he therefore concluded by saying he should vote for the impeachment.

The chief speakers in the debate in favor of Lord Melville were Lord Castlereagh,⁸ Mr. Robert Dundas (Lord Melville's son), Mr. Canning,⁹ and the Attorney-General; against him, Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. Grey, Mr. Whitbread, etc. The friends of Mr. Wilberforce and those of Lord Sidmouth¹⁰ amounting to about thirty in each party, supported Mr. Bond's amendment for a criminal prosecution. Mr. Whitbread, and the whole of the Opposition, declared for the impeachment. That the latter, however, might not lose the whole object of their motion, they agreed, should they fail in that for the impeachment, to unite with the former two parties for Mr. Bond's amendment. On the first division, after Mr. Whitbread's reply, the numbers stood thus: for the impeachment of Lord Melville, 195; against it, 272. Majority against the impeachment, 77.

On the second division, for Mr. Bond's amendment, the numbers were: for the criminal prosecution, 238; Against it, 229. Majority for the criminal prosecution, 9.¹¹

About half past six o'clock on Thursday morning the House adjourned to Friday.

[Neither Mr. Pitt nor Mr. Fox spoke in the debate.]

Friday, 14 June 1805

Mr. Whitbread addressed the House, in a speech which lasted two hours, on the propriety of moving certain resolutions against the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the object of which was that there should be upon the Journals a record that the illegal practice with which he charged him might not become a dangerous precedent. He thought the act of lending the £40,000 might be deemed justifiable, yet it was desirable that any future Chancellor of the Exchequer should not be able to vindicate an infraction of law. He took a view of the transactions of Government with Boyd and Company in 1795 and 1796 to show that when they possessed the confidence of Ministers they were insolvent. He concluded with a string of resolutions explaining the transactions alluded to and stating that the said advance was contrary to law.

Mr. Pitt spoke at great length to show that the transaction was fair, honorable, and important; it prevented the house from failing, and the effect of such a failure, at such a time, would have rendered the negotiation of a new loan disadvantageous, infinitely beyond £40,000. The loss by the advance was not so much as six-pence; by

¹ John Pytches (1774–1829), Whig M.P. for Sudbury (1802–1807)

² John Somers Cocks (1760–1841), Tory M.P. for West Looe (1782–1784), Grampond (1784–1790), and Reigate (1790–1806)

³ Henry Petty (1780–1863), Whig M.P. for Calne (1802–1806)

⁴ Isaac Hawkins Browne (1745–1818), independent Tory M.P. for Bridgenorth (1784–1812)

⁵ Boyd Alexander (1758–1825), Tory M.P. for Renfrewshire (1796–1802) and Glasgow Burghs (1803–1806)

⁶ William Ralph Cartwright (1771–1847), Tory M.P. for Northamptonshire (1797–1831)

⁷ William Wilberforce (1759–1833), independent Tory M.P. for Kingston-upon-Hull (1780–1784) and Yorkshire (1784–1812)

⁸ Robert Stewart (1769–1822), Lord Castlereagh, Tory M.P. for Tregony (1794–1796), Orford (1796–1797), and County Down (1801–1805)

⁹ George Canning (1770–1827), Tory M.P. for Newtown, Isle of Wight (1793–1796), Wendover (1796–1802), and Tralee (1802–1806).

¹⁰ Henry Addington (1757–1844), Viscount Sidmouth, Tory M.P. for Devizes (1784–1805) and Prime Minister (1801–1804). One of Pitt's pre-eminent rivals in the Tory party, he had just accepted (January 1805) a peerage and entered the House of Lords.

¹¹ Viscount Meville was tried and acquitted by the House of Lords in 1806.

the refusal, a loss of many times £40.000 would have arisen, and incalculable mischief besides. He therefore justified his conduct; and, placing himself at the mercy of the House, was determined to abide its decision.

Mr. H. Lascelles¹ and Lord Castlereagh defended Mr. Pitt and insisted that he had been influenced solely by great public considerations.

Mr. Fox made a very temperate speech to show the propriety of the motion, but admitted that any censure of the House ought to be made as mildly as possible, and he intimated that an act of indemnity, properly worded, would be less objectionable than the resolutions of his friend Mr. Whitbread.

The conversation continued for a length of time; and after many Members had delivered their opinions, the previous question was carried on Mr. Whitbread's resolutions; and one for a bill of indemnity (proposed by Mr. Lascelles) was agreed to.

Monday, 17 June 1805

Sir W. Scott² obtained leave to bring in a bill to amend the Act of the 1 George I relative to the livings of poor clergy under £70 a year.

Wednesday, 19 June 1805

In a Committee of Ways and Means it was resolved, on the motion of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that the sum of £4.000.000 out of the surplus of the Consolidated Fund, and the sum of £1.190.000 out of the surplus of the grants of last year, be granted towards the supply. The report was ordered.

The House went into a committee of supply. The sums of £2.000 for the support of the British Forces in Africa, £1.500 for the Veterinary College, and £15.000 for the Board of Agriculture were voted.

Several Members spoke in favor of the Duke of Athol's petition, which was carried by a majority of 57.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer brought down a message (as given in the Lords), and moved that it be taken into consideration on Friday.

Thursday, 20 June 1805

The Loyalty Loan Bill was read a third time, and passed.

Mr. Bond asked whether, the House having directed a prosecution on the Tenth Report against Lord Melville, it was in the discretion of the Attorney-General to exclude any distinct evidence upon any particular part of the case? If it was not, he wished some intimation to the effect might be given to the Attorney-General.

The Attorney-General said it was not sufficient for him to collect the sense of the House, but he should desire to have its opinion distinctly stated. He considered it as more consistent with the dignity of the House to define what he was to prosecute than to leave him to collect it from the body of the Report. He asked if he was to make use of Mr. Trotter as an evidence against Lord Melville and whether he was to take notice of what had fallen from Lord Melville in his late examination in that House?

Mr. Whitbread intimated that he hoped a bill of indemnity would be passed as to Mr. Trotter, to enable him to disclose the whole business relative to the Navy Pay Office.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that though there were some points that required consideration, he thought there was no ground either for the impeachment or the criminal prosecution of Lord Melville.

After some discussion, it was agreed that any further debate on the subject should be deferred till the motion was made.

¹ Henry Lascelles (1767–1841), Tory M.P. for Yorkshire (1796–1806)

² Sir William Scott (1745–1836), Tory M.P. for Downton (1790–1801) and Oxford University (1801–1821)

Mr. Grey begged to call the attention of the House to the critical situation of the country. The motive which stimulated him to inquiry was an apprehension that Parliament might speedily be prorogued. Two years since, when the war was commenced, various grounds were stated for entering into the contest; it now became the duty of the House to ascertain what would be the best policy to follow, as not one of the grounds originally stated for beginning the war had been maintained, and none of the prospects then held out had been realized.

The annual expense of the country was now £71.000.000, and come peace when it might, there was not the most distant idea of the public expenditure being less than £40.000.000 per annum. With respect to the Army, he contended, that the improvement so much talked of by Mr. Pitt on his return to power had been forgotten, while the reduction of the Militia had fallen miserably short of its intent.

Adverting to the state of the Navy, he attempted to show that during the administration of Earl Saint Vincent, it was in a more respectable state than at present. Lord Saint Vincent had been charged in the House as the greatest enemy the Navy ever had. He, therefore, in the name of that Lord, called for an inquiry into his conduct, and trusted the session would not be suffered to pass away without justice being done.

Adverting to the domestic situation of the country, he remarked that it must afford high satisfaction that at no period in its history had the people submitted with greater cheerfulness to the pressure of the times, and he believed there never had been a more determined spirit manifested to resist invasion. At the same time, the burdens of the people were great, and in all possible cases they ought to be alleviated.

In regard to the present situation of Ireland, he was happy that he had to congratulate the House. The mild government of Lord Hardwicke¹ had worked wonders, and the people felt their interest in preserving the British connection.

He then took a view of the means of the enemy for continuing the war, and expressed his firm opinion that the invasion would be attempted when we least expected it. On concluding, he called the attention of the House to the negotiation with Russia, and argued that Russia could not possibly interfere with France without the consent of Austria or Prussia. He then moved

That an humble address be presented to His Majesty praying that he will be pleased not to prorogue the sittings of Parliament until His Majesty shall be enabled to lay before the House some information on the negotiations pending with foreign powers, and on the views and objects of His Majesty in the further prosecution of the contest in which we are engaged.

Lord Castlereagh asserted that the motion was unnecessary at present, unless it was intended to insinuate that Ministers had forfeited the confidence of the country. In answer to Mr. Grey's remarks on the Army, he stated that in 1802, when the Army was at its highest pitch, setting aside the Militia entirely, it amounted to 174.000 men, and by the last returns on 1 June it was now 176.899, being nearly 3.000 more than it ever was at any period of its history. He thought Mr. Grey had drawn too gloomy a prospect on this subject. He had said that the army had not been improved, nor materially increased in its composition. The disposable force, however, amounted to 37.000 men, which had been augmented by 15.000 from the Militia. The experiments made in recruiting had proved eminently successful. With regard to the Navy, Mr. Grey did not seem to have examined that subject with accuracy; had he done so, he would have made a comparison of the number of ships on foreign stations worn out in the service which had come home and been laid up, having been put out of commission. Lord Castlereagh went at great length into the various topics introduced by Mr. Grey, and declared himself against the motion.

Mr. Windham² and Lord Temple spoke in favor of the motion.

¹ Philip Yorke (1757–1834), Earl of Hardwicke, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (1801–1806)

² William Windham (1750–1810), independent Tory M.P. for Norwich (1784–1801) and Saint Mawes (1802–1806)

Mr. Fox took a luminous view of the present situation of Europe, in the course of which he stated that the answer to the overtures from France ought instantly to be that England would apply to Russia and negotiate conjointly with her, or state that a treaty had been concluded between them to that effect.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer maintained that there was no practical difference between a prorogation and an adjournment at this period of the Session. In opposition to the assertions of those who supported the motion, he proved that our finances were in the most flourishing state, and notwithstanding the obstacles to the formation of an army, we had now a military force of 140.000, and not less than 100.000 for our own possessions, and near 400.000 volunteers actually in arms.

He disclaimed all intention of casting reflections on Lord Saint Vincent, but he was bound to say that with regard to repairs of ships, providing them with stores, and causing different sorts of ships to be fitted out for the service with vigor, dispatch, and judgment, this country was greatly indebted to Viscount Melville.

The object of the war, he observed, was not to reduce France, but to secure ourselves and to set an example to Europe, by which a sense of honor might be kindled to resist aggression and to maintain independence. The object was to provide for the safety of Europe on a large scale, which had not been attained, but yet possibly it might be accomplished, if Europe should be as true to itself as Great Britain had been both to herself and to her allies. He agreed, however, that a joint war or a joint peace were preferable to either of them separately, and that he had no difficulty in disclosing such to be the object of Government.

After a reply from Mr. Grey, the House divided, when there were: ayes, 110; noes, 261. Majority against the motion, 151.

Friday, 21 June 1805

On the motion for considering His Majesty's message, the Chancellor of the Exchequer declined entering fully into the subject, but simply moved that the sum of £3.500.000, instead of £5.000.000, be appropriated to obtaining Continental co-operation.

Mr. Fox contended that if the mover gave no information as to the engagements, he ought to have no money. He took nearly the same grounds as in the debate of the preceding evening, arguing in favor of a peace on reasonable terms, and the appointment of a congress for that purpose.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer professed his determination not to enter into any details and, after some conversation, the resolution was carried without a division.

The sum of £20.000 was granted to purchase Mr. Townley's antiquities.

In the Committee of Ways and Means, the Chancellor of the Exchequer moved that, agreeably to the terms in which the Budget was opened, the sum of 14 millions and a half be granted on the surplus of the Consolidated Fund for 1803, 1804, and 1805. This was agreed to, after a short explanation betwixt Mr. Pitt and Mr. Johnstone.¹ In the same Committee, several votes for Exchequer Bills were passed. There were eight millions of Exchequer Bills in one vote, two millions and an half in a second, and one million and an half in a third. Agreed to.

Adjourned.

"House of Commons," *The European Magazine* (July 1805):57–65.

¹ George Johnstone (1764–1813), Whig M.P. for Aldeburgh (1800–1802) and Hedon (1802–1813)