

'Yobs' Take Over the House of Lords

An historic moment has been made as 300 young people from across the UK took over parliament and debated issues affecting them in the UK today, including the negative portrayal of young people in the media and the environment. Charlotte Lytton, 16, and Rhona Ezuma, 18, report back from the House of Lords where the country's 'yobs' made their mark.

2nd May 2008 - a date to remember for youths and adults everywhere as hundreds of young members of the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) took their seats in the House of Lords and debated like the big politicians. There was no stone left unturned as Members of the Youth Parliament (MYPs) voted on the three most important issues for the UKYP to focus on this year. The agenda was daring and varied ranging in topics from lowering the voting age to pushing forward for a national concession card providing free transport for young people.

Cheers, applause and hearty congratulations characterised the day, as issues were brought forward and intelligently discussed. One of the hot phrases of the morning was "no representation, no taxation," which contested the government's ability to demand taxes from working teenagers who are not old enough to vote.

"I'm finding it really exciting ... everyone's got a really interesting point to put across," said 18-year old Daniel McCrisken from Northern Ireland.

In the short interlude between debates, members did their best to convince fellow colleagues to vote for their motion over cups of tea and orange juice and conversations were continuously interrupted with notes of praise and adulation for the event itself, which is only the second time such a discussion has taken place in the House of Lords without peers or Lords.

MYP Robert Sassoon from Reading said, "They're all such fantastic campaigns, and if we had the resources to devote our time to all six of these campaigns then we would and we should."

Fellow MYP member Pierce, 18, representing Manchester said the debates were "genuine" and he felt that "at the end of this we will have three true campaigns which will reflect what young people want in our country".

One of the six main issues put on the agenda was the image of young people in the media. As young people ourselves, we are tired with the representation of young people in the media as 'yobs' and 'thugs'. It was agreed that the media often stigmatised young people in an undesirable way. Strong focus was placed on the fact that changing the representation of young people in the media had to stem from young people's "active involvement" in positive things such as the Youth Parliament.

Robert from the UKYP felt the publicity generated from the House of Lords debates would be a great start: "This is fantastic press which we've never had before and it's so positive. This is the kind of thing the media really need to focus on." Although this issue failed to make it into the final three issues to focus on this year, it was clear from the reactions of the MYPs that this is an area that demands wider attention.

Contrary to what people might have thought, it was not just a meeting for youths to rant, demand their concerns and run off again. The speakers were informed and articulate young people pushing forward their issues while holding them up in wider contexts with two key concerns that underpinned every debate; viability and feasibility.

The last issue on the agenda was the environment. Acie Marshall, MYP representative from Kennington and Chelsea, gave a truly moving speech about the environment that ended with burst of applause. This was the issue that the Youth Parliament, with a unanimous agreement of 490 votes, chose to make the key focus of their national campaign this year.

Augustus Chipungu, representing the constituency of Bedfordshire said, "Today, we have had an excellent discussion about politics, and it clearly shows that young people are well informed about politics and want to get engaged."

Acie Marshall agreed: "The day went brilliantly – the young people spoke and that's the most important thing."

With transport costs, the removal of tuition fees and environmental awareness being voted as the top three issues for this year, there is no doubt that the MYPs will continue making great strides forward for young people today and for generations to come. Helping to promote the positive image of young people in the media that they so desperately want.

The final word comes from Acie, whose environmental campaign reigned victorious at the event after a powerful and inspiring speech. He said, "Don't underestimate somebody without a voice", which is the greatest advice any young person can be given on the road to making their voices heard.

6 comments

RE:Poor title

I'm sure its just sarcastic :P

Jamie taylor (age 16) from Shropshire, 28 June 2008 19:37

Judgement

I quite agree. It's been stated that the youth are becoming lazy, rude and useless, hanging out of street corners, shouting, drinking or doing other unsavoury things.

To people who say that, I say: LOL WUT. Those are the ones that choose to waste their time doing such things, while there are a large amount of us that work hard and achieve well- GCSE grades have been going up for the past few years, and by god they're a lot of effort- so saying that the youth are incapable, based off the small minority degrades the rest of us. (Angry face)

Andy Han (age 16) from Leicester, 20 June 2008 13:04

Judgement

I find it completey wrong to judge all young people on the way a small minority are acting. Most teenagers and young people do not act this way and deserve to have a better chance and a voice.



Mollie Possell (age 14) from Cheltenham, 05 June 2008 16:21

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