

OPINION

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Chairman of the Editorial/Management Board of *Science in Parliament*. Member of Parliament for Bolton, South East, since 1997, Treasurer to the Parliamentary & Scientific Committee and formerly Reader in Organic Chemistry in the Department of Pure & Applied Chemistry at the University of Salford.



It is a great privilege to succeed Dr Doug Naysmith, MP for Bristol North West, and I would like to thank Doug for developing *Science in Parliament* over the past five years as a successful and authoritative magazine and assure him of my very best wishes in his new role as Chairman of The Parliamentary & Scientific Committee.

My enthusiasm for chemistry started at age 11 when I acquired a set of apparatus and chemicals along with "recipe books" from an older boy in my village on the West Lancashire Plain. I entertained audiences at home and abroad for 29 years with a popular 90-minute lecture called "The Magic of Chemistry". This included an appearance on Alan Titchmarsh's lunchtime show from Pebble Mill performing "live" experiments in the presence of other guests, including Raymond Baxter and other presenters from successive Tomorrow's World teams. This culminated on 5 November 1997 when, dressed as Guy Fawkes, I legally exploded gunpowder in the Houses of Parliament, when presenting extracts from that lecture in the Jubilee Room!

I previously served on Bolton

Metropolitan District Council as a Councillor for 21 years and for ten of these as Chair of the Housing Committee. This generated ambitions to push for a higher profile for housing in Westminster, although science and technology policy have now reasserted themselves as my major interest. I became a founder Member of the Environmental Audit Select Committee in November 1997 and a Member of the Science & Technology Select Committee in March 2000. I am an Honorary Adviser in the House to the Royal Society of Chemistry and an Honorary Member of the Society of Chemical Industry. I also Chair the Board of Directors of Bolton Technical Innovation Centre Ltd, which appears to be the first junior incubator in the country (see *Science in Parliament*, Autumn 2005 for more details).

This is an exciting time for scientists, especially as we have a Government that is committed to science and technology, and the wealth and well being that this can bring to our fellow citizens and others in developing countries. 2005 was the year when the focus was on climate change and natural disasters and our

interest in these will be maintained. Important debates during the next twelve months will include energy, when the Energy Review is completed. The Human Fertility and Embryology Act is currently under review. Other exciting issues include the Galileo Project that prompts the question whether Europe will now begin to predominate with advances in space research?

However the most important people of all are the readers of and contributors to *Science in Parliament*. Our editorial team, the Editorial/Management board and Professor Peter Simpson and Mrs Annabel Lloyd are always interested to receive both criticism and comment on further improvements to this increasingly valuable publication and all the above are thanked for their important contributions. *Science in Parliament* is published four times a year and reports on meetings of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee and other events in Parliament including Members' contributions in both Houses, where science is covered in the broadest possible sense with important inputs from engineering, technology and medicine.