

Hansard Alumni Newsletter

April-May 2006

Welcome to the first Hansard Alumni Newsletter of 2006. Following a hugely eventful 2005, the Hansard Society started 2006 with a wide variety of projects, activities and publications. Below are details of just a few of them...

Scholars Programme Update

January saw the arrival of the Spring 2006 Hansard Scholars. The group, made up of 20 US undergraduates and nine postgraduates from countries including Argentina, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Kosovo and Tanzania have all now returned home to their respective countries where they are waiting for their exam and dissertation results. Arrangements are now well underway for our Summer Scholars who arrive in London on May 20th. Further details on: hansardsociety.org.uk/programmes/study_programme

"Where are they now?"

Renato Andrade, Brazil
(Spring 2005 Research Scholar)



Having got a taste for academia during his time on the Hansard Research Scholars Programme, Spring 2005 Researcher Renato returned home in April 2005 to enrol at the University of Sao Paolo.

One of Brazil's finest academic institutions, the university offered Renato the opportunity to further his studies whilst continuing to work as a journalist. "The Hansard Scholars Programme played a very important part in my decision", said Renato. "It allowed me to carry on with my studies, something that is very difficult in Brasilia where time is almost complete devoted to work".

Having worked as an economic and political reporter for a number of years in Brasilia, Renato is now a freelance reporter for Reuters where he is putting into practice what he learnt from his time on the Programme. "My experience in London was remarkable", he added. "I am very proud to be the first Brazilian to attend this programme and I hope many others will come." We do too!

The Democracy Series



"Our democracy thrives on debate and ideas and I hope these pamphlets will stimulate a discussion and creative thinking about our democracy."

With these words, Bridget Prentice MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department for Constitutional Affairs, launched the Hansard Society's Democracy Series (edited by Dr Philip Parvin) at a reception in Foyles Bookstore in London.

Lord Holme, Chairman of the Hansard Society, opened the event, which was also addressed by Professor Haleh Afshar, principal author of the first issue in the Series on Democracy & Islam. To obtain further information on the project, visit: democracyseries.org.uk

Power to the People – Does the Public Want More Democracy?



A lively debate took place at the latest Hansard Society/Electoral Commission Democracy Forum *Power to the People? Does the public want more democracy?* The event marked the publication of the third annual *Audit of Political Engagement*.

Introduced by Lord Holme, Chair of the Hansard Society and chaired by Sam Younger, Chair of the Electoral Commission, the substance of the meeting involved very different views as to the merits of representative democracy and direct democracy.

Speakers included: Dr Philip Parvin, Hansard Society; John Healey MP - Financial Secretary, HM Treasury; Matthew Parris - Columnist, *The Times*; Pam Giddy - Director of the Power Inquiry; Andrew Stunell MP and Douglas Carswell MP, author of *Direct Democracy*.

Other News from the Hansard Society

Channel 4 Political Awards in association with the Hansard Society

The Hansard Society joined up with Channel 4 for its eighth annual Political Awards earlier this year. The awards recognise those who have made an impact on British politics over the previous 12 months.

The high-profile ceremony took place before an invited audience of MPs, Peers and journalists at Channel 4's Westminster HQ. *This Week*, BBC1's weekly late night political review, won the Hansard Society's first ever award for 'Opening Up Politics'. Rt Hon Lord Holme of Cheltenham, Chair of the Hansard Society, presented the award to the show's co-hosts Diane Abbott MP & Michael Portillo. For further information visit: hansardsociety.org.uk/Channel4_awards_2006



Under-18s made their voices heard in the latest Hansard Society online debate – *The EU...what is its future in your eyes?* The forum ran from February 27th to March 17th at headsup.org.uk and produced some fascinating results. The latest forum summary which is available to download, revealed that: 55% say 'No' to the Euro; young people feel British first rather than European; they also approve of the opening up of Europe; and call for balanced EU reporting. For further information on the forum contact: citizenship@hansard.lse.ac.uk



In the run up to the English local elections on May 4, schools, colleges and youth groups were invited to recreate the excitement and mass participation of real election campaigns by taking part in the **Y Vote Mock Local Elections 2006**.

The Y Vote Mock Local Elections were run by the Hansard Society and supported by the Electoral Commission and the Department for Education & Skills. For more information, please visit: mockelections.co.uk

Legislative & Regulatory Reform Bill

As part of our ongoing work into the legislative process, the Hansard Society organised a meeting entitled *Constitutional Outrage or Sensible Reform?* to discuss the Legislative and Regulatory reform bill currently going through Parliament. Participants included:

- Jim Murphy MP, Cabinet Office Minister responsible for the Bill
- Rt Hon Ken Clarke MP, Chair of the Conservative Party's Democracy Taskforce
- David Howarth MP
- John Walker, National Policy advisor at the Federation of Small Businesses

The meeting was chaired by Kate Jenkins, Vice-Chair of the Hansard Society.

Read what the BBC had to say about the meeting at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4815240.stm

Tell Parliament Report 2004-2005

The Hansard Society has been instrumental in developing and evaluating the contribution that ICT can make to parliamentary processes and participation. The Society's research has been at its most intensive where web-based technology has been examined in the context of parliamentary consultations and inquiries. We have published extensively on this research over the last

10 years. Our new report accounts for the latest round of this research, under the name of TellParliament (visit: telloparliament.net).

US/ UK Elections – Lessons to be Learnt



In January, practitioners from the fields of politics, regulation, campaigning, communications, public opinion and the media discussed recent elections in the United Kingdom and the United States at a lively, well-attended conference in London. Speakers included:

- Jonathan Freedland – Columnist & broadcaster
- Nick Clegg MP
- Tom Foley – Former Speaker, US House of Representatives
- John Fortier – American Enterprise Institute
- Rt Hon Michael Howard QC MP
- Clare Ettinghausen – Chief Executive, Hansard Society
- Adam Boulton – Political Editor, Sky News
- Martha Kearney – Political Editor, BBC Newsnight
- Dan Balz – Washington Post
- Professor Anthony King

The *UK/US Elections – Lessons to be Learnt?* conference was organised by the Hansard Society, in partnership with the Washington-based American Enterprise Institute and Brookings Institution.

Upcoming events

Democratic Renewal: reform of Parliament & public life - the view from the political parties

As part of the Hansard Society's long-standing involvement on issues relating to the reform of Parliament, engagement between Parliament and the public, and promoting effective parliamentary democracy, the Society is organising a series of meetings on democratic renewal with representatives of the three main political parties. Two meetings, hosted by Nick Clegg MP (Liberal Democrat Shadow Home Secretary) and the Rt Hon Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP (Chair of the Conservative Party's Democracy Task Force) have already taken place and the series concludes with a talk by Rt Hon the Lord Falconer of Thoroton QC - Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs & Lord Chancellor – 16th May. For further details, please email: hansard@hansard.lse.ac.uk

For further details on any of the issues covered in this newsletter, please contact Alex Boughton on: a.boughton@hansard.lse.ac.uk or at: +44 207 428 1213.