

There is genuine anger in the country about the apparent impunity of Prince Andrew. The suggestion that a fitting punishment is the removal of a title has gone down particularly badly.

Andrew stands accused of serious sexual offences. There is considerable prima facie evidence that at least warrants a criminal investigation. Since the publication of Andrew Lownie's book last month (Entitled) there has been increasing concern that Andrew is guilty of misconduct in public office. On the weekend there were accusations that he sought to corrupt a police officer by asking for assistance in attacking his chief accuser, Virginia Giuffre.

It has again been said this week that MPs are forbidden from discussing the royals in the Commons. Yet this is incorrect. In response to comments by the Speaker in 2022 I wrote to Speaker Hoyle and had the following response, explaining that you can discuss and criticise members of the royal family:

Mr Speaker asked me to thank you for your email and to respond on his behalf.

There is no general prohibition on discussing of matters relating to the Royal Family in the House of Commons and recent press coverage has rather confused the issue.

Matters relating to the Queen can be debated, and indeed much legislation affects the Crown. For example, in 2011 Parliament passed the Sovereign Grant Act, which made provision to replace the civil list with a grant. This directly affected the Queen and the Royal Family.

There are two different prohibitions which have led to the misconception that the House of Commons cannot talk about the Queen or members of the Royal family.

The first is that it is forbidden to use the Queen's name to influence debate. This has two purposes: it keeps the Crown above politics. Just as importantly, it makes sure that Parliament is independent of the Crown and people cannot argue for a particular measure "because the Queen would like it".

The second is that it is forbidden to make incidental criticism of a wide range of people in public life. This includes members of the Royal Family, but also include the senior judiciary, other MPs all members of the House of the Lords. The prohibition is on incidental criticism: there is no prohibition of debating a motion which explicitly criticises such people. The principle here is that there should be notice that criticisms are going to be made, so that those on both sides of the argument may speak.

The third thing in play is that questions relate to ministerial responsibilities, and while ministers will be responsible for some things related to members of the Royal family, they are certainly not responsible for their conduct.

I hope this reply is helpful. Thank you for taking the time to write and please accept our best wishes.

You can find the full correspondence here: https://assets.nationbuilder.com/themes/64638ff9a64891566671b48d/attachments/original/1760977907/Correspondence_with_the_Speaker_re_debating_the_royals.pdf?1760977907

Some people say Andrew has done nothing wrong. Yet he is accused of having sex with a minor who was trafficked for that purpose. He has clearly been dishonest about his relationship with Epstein, and the events surrounding his meetings with Giuffre. There are also serious questions to ask about

his business dealings while serving as trade ambassador for the UK government.

Throughout this time the royals have sought to protect Andrew in order to protect themselves. They have done as little as possible in response to mounting accusations. Even now there is no sign of concern for the victims of abuse, or for the need for accountability for those in public office. It's always cast as a distraction or embarrassment for the royals.

Yet it is not credible to believe Charles and William didn't know anything about these latest revelations. Clearly they would have been briefed over the years. Yet they did nothing except try to keep Andrew safe from serious consequences for fear those consequences would blow back on them.

This scandal, which has been dragging on for two decades, is extraordinary for the complete silence from the country's political leaders. That has to stop.

Please speak up and address this issue in parliament.

The public should be able to expect a full public or parliamentary inquiry into the royal household. Who knew what and when? Why didn't they seek to ensure there was proper accountability? Why didn't the police act in the face of mounting evidence? Was that because of royal pressure?

This scandal has gone on too long. Whether you support the monarchy or not, our MPs must be the first to defend the rule of law and the highest standards of conduct in public life.

Thank you

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