

UK MPs vote against free speech

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It really beggars belief, but this Friday afternoon, while they hope the public's eyes are elsewhere, MPs have [voted](#) to restrict freedom of information. Sensible private members bills are regularly voted down on a Friday and yet a measure to exempt MPs from the Freedom of Information Act was passed by an unholy alliance of Tory and Labour whips with the connivance of the Deputy Speaker. The only hope is that

the Lords kicks the Bill out. This was Gordon Brown's chance to reassert freedom and honesty and openness in Parliament and he blew it. What he means when he says he wants to strengthen Parliament is he wants to give it more powers to ignore the tide of freedom of information that is sweeping around the globe. Like Putin's Russia we have taken a backward step. The arguments for the Bill were all self-serving. Improvements in the Data Protection Act could easily have prevented the disclosure of confidential correspondence between MPs and their constituents. In itself this is a small measure. But as a symbol of MPs' contempt for the public and for open democracy, it speaks volumes. At a time when the internet promised a more responsive and open democracy, MPs have voted to increase the British culture of secrecy.

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