

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Form and timing of Lords reform

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From Mr Jeremy Norman

Sir, The recent vote in the House of Lords on the age of consent (letters, July 24) has done the nation a great favour. It has highlighted the antidemocratic and anachronistic nature of our second chamber. Having successfully overturned the will of the elected Commons, the Upper House has also chosen to flout a ruling of the European Commission of Human Rights.

A quiet revolution is already happening which will inevitably lead to the demise of the peerage system. Her Majesty the Queen has ruled that in future the succession to the throne should be vested in the first-born of either sex. The same rule can hardly fail to be applied sooner or later to the peerage.

Imagine the scene in a few years, when both adopted and illegitimate children can succeed, as they too will wish to claim their equal rights under the law. Further chaos will ensue when titles become divorced from great houses and the estates where sons have been given property in anticipation of inheritance of a title, only to find that the title passes to their sister or cousin. Further fun will be had when daughters of a former peer, now dead, challenge the rights of the son or daughter of a living peer. Clearly it is time for this medieval farce to end.

The peerage is good for nothing now except as an occasional pageant of moth-eaten ermine walking backwards into oblivion.

Yours sincerely,
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(Chairman and Managing Director,
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July 24.