

# Recruiting the record: Using opponents' exact words in parliamentary argumentation

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## *Abstract*

*Members of parliamentary institutions have a special feature of their discourse community open to them in argumentation—the use of the public record as an authority for others' exact words. We show how members of the British House of Commons use the official record explicitly to recruit their political opponents' words to promote their own projects. We identify a robust set of elements in which a speaker quotes someone understood to be a political opponent, invoking the unimpeachable source of the parliamentary record. Speakers can exploit the basic framework of the device to emphasize (with dramatic or comic effect) the identity of the quoted source. The rhetorical effect in all cases is that such words are especially unchallengeable, and the fact that they are sourced from an opponent's own mouth makes the message they carry immune to attack as interested or partial.*

*Keywords:* parliament; quotation; argument; accountability; rhetoric; stake; interest.

## **Introduction**

Can you use other people to back up what you yourself are saying? Can you, indeed, use the exact words of your declared opponents to do so? In this article we focus on how, in one specially favored discursive domain, a parliamentary chamber, speakers use opponents' words to promote their own arguments. We use data from the British House of Commons, but we are not specifically concerned with British politics or British discourse as such—our interest is in how speakers make use of a crucial feature of any parliamentary scene, that is, members' open access to a public record of their political opponents' words.

The verbatim record allows members to make a point of invoking others' words literally. Literal quotation, of course, is available to any ordinary speaker, but in everyday talk there is normally no record of what has been said, and literality is a figure of speech. Speakers can and do use prosody, quotation, and pragmatic implication to mark what they are saying as direct reported speech, (Holt 1996, 2000; Klewitz and Couper-Kuhlen 1999), but can never ground it in a public record in quite the same way that parliamentarians can. By seeing how this potential is used in parliament we hope to add to the literature on parliamentary argumentation and to make a bridge to the discursive study of language in use, especially as it touches on people's concern with accountability and authority (Leudar 1995, 1998; Edwards and Potter 1992; Antaki 1994; Billig 1987/1996), and specifically on their use of other people as authority for their arguments (Dickerson 1997).

Literal quotation in a parliamentary setting, as elsewhere, is to be compared to other ways of formulating people's positions—using direct or indirect reported speech, or by freely attributing others with various wants, beliefs, dispositions, and so on (see Antaki 1994). We shall be arguing that the use of verbatim reports of others' speech, authorized by the record, is very different to these other alternatives which are open to a speaker, especially to colorful and patently interested redescription (whose analysis in a variety of contexts is the subject of much ethno-methodologically inspired work, especially the discursive psychology of Edwards and Potter 1992). We focus on parliamentarians' literal quotation, but not their literal quotation of just anything—they quote a variety of sources, including official reports, letters from constituents, poetry, news headlines, extra-parliamentary speeches, and so on. Rather, we look at their quoting of their opponents in the House. We want to focus on the rhetorical device of recruiting an opponent's recorded words to support the speaker's own position.

Interestingly enough, the literature on persuasion and rhetoric, so far as we can tell, seems to have overlooked authorized literal quotation as a resource. Dickerson (1997), for example, who has an extensive list of ways in which others' views are deployed in one's own argument, does not mention parliamentary exchanges. (He has, though, one particularly significant example of political talk, which we examine as example [15] in this article.) The use of this rhetorical device in the British House of Commons is not rare—statistical counting is not the focus of this paper, but it helps to know that what we are talking about happens about once in a week's worth of debate, and is treated, as we shall see, as a fairly routine activity.

In examining how speakers use others' words in that way, we shall perforce have to entertain a certain amount of complexity in the interplay between the words recruited and the respective parties' actual or claimed argumentative positions. This all militates against a mere quantitative counting of the occasions on which others' words are used for a speaker's own purposes. Even if that could be done, it would shed no light on how speakers do so, to what ends, and with what implications for their own and the others' positions. So we are shepherded towards a close qualitative analysis of a set of exemplary cases where reference to various parties' positions is reasonably intelligible. In what follows we shall first give a feel for what literal quotation looks like, and compare it to nonliteral quotation. Then, in the body of the article, we shall catalogue a set of examples of the device at work. Finally, to show that the members of the parliamentary community orient to its various elements, we shall cite illustrative marginal cases and end with one telling example where the speaker is thwarted in his attempt to bring off the manoeuvre. It is important to reiterate at this point that we do not want to claim to be making any political analysis in this article; nor does it matter to our argument that the speakers are members of the British House of Commons as opposed to any other parliamentary body. We aim to perform a discursive analysis of a technique of rhetoric open to any member of an institution that publishes authoritative records of its verbal proceedings.

### **Analysis**

Our analysis is based on the talk as transcribed by clerks into the 'official record' of the British parliament (commonly referred to as Hansard). Such records are a routine part of parliamentary life. In the Australian, Canadian, and Indian parliaments, the verbatim record, following British usage, is also called Hansard; in Sweden, the equivalent is the Riksdag *Protokoll*; in the United States, the Congressional Record; and so on. Our choice of speeches to sample was triggered by happening to spot something interesting in some materials we were looking at for quite other reasons (a debate on Northern Ireland), and, holding that instance in mind, we carried on looking until we had gathered a sufficient set of further examples (that is to say, until we had what we hold to be a persuasive sample of speakers citing the record, and variants on this canonical core). The period covered is from April 1996 to December 1997.

The style of our analysis owes a great deal to the ethnomethodological sentiment of looking to see how people display their understanding of the world in the way they organize their visible activities. The general

sentiment has been refined in various ways over the years since Garfinkel's classic collection of early ethnomethodological studies (1967), and what we have found most helpful in this investigation of parliamentary speech is the strand developed by discursive psychologists. The idea here is to attend very closely to the actual design of people's talk, using conversational analytic insights into the way talk moves the interaction on, and keeping a weather eye open for such robust devices as quotation, use of descriptions, and displays of accountability. That approach has a fair track record in analyzing political talk, illuminating such things as 'facts' in disputes over lobby briefings (Edwards and Potter 1990), the death of Princess Diana (MacMillan and Edwards 1999), or the portrayal of Romanies in political argument (Leudar and Nekvapil 2000), but is perhaps better known for its application to topics traditionally considered to lie within the domain of social psychology (e.g., arguing and thinking, in Billig [1996] or Antaki [1994]; prejudice and stereotyping, in Wetherell and Potter [1992]; identity, in Antaki and Widdicombe [1998]; or madness, in Leudar and Thomas [2000: chap. 8]). Its essential features, whether analyzing material from the political or the mundane world, are a close attention to the details of talk, and a commitment to analyzing what interests talk serves.

Our data in this article are parliamentary records of speeches. In common with other parliamentary records known to us, Hansard is, of course, not transcribed in the same way as would be done in conversation analysis (see, for example, the discussion of transcription in ten Have 1999). But there are two good reasons to proceed with Hansard as it stands. The sort of rhetorical devices we are looking for work at a discursive level. This is to say, we expect them to work via their lexical realization and their sequential placement in argumentation, both of which are captured in Hansard, even though other aspects of the talk, such as prosody, are not. Moreover, it is Hansard which the members of the House of Commons use as the authoritative verbal record of their debates, rather than some private transcription, even if it were more complete. In this sense what ethnomethodologists call members are literally Members (of Parliament), and they orient to Members' resources. Hansard is a resource for arguments in the House, and especially those in which what was said is reported directly. Take for instance the following text (we have added the italics and line numbers to this and all other examples).

(1) [Hansard vol. 293, 2 April 1996, cols. 294–295]

- 1        Rev. Ian Paisley: We see in the proposals before us another
- 2        attack on the Forum. I was reading in Hansard of 24 January

3        1996 that the Prime Minister, replying to the Leader of  
 4        Her Majesty's Opposition, had some interesting things to say  
 5 →     about the Forum. *I was not in the House the day he made*  
 6 →     *that statement, but he said:* 'I see the election providing a  
 7        pool of representatives from which party delegations to the  
 8        talks could be drawn, and a means to index the strength of  
 9        the parties delegations in the talks process.'

Note that the speaker, as he himself makes clear, was not in the House when the words he quotes were uttered by the Prime Minister. His report is based exclusively on the record in Hansard, and not at all on his personal experience.

It is worth noting here how it is that the Hansard staff recognize that a Member actually is quoting. In the foregoing case, it is explicit in lines 2 and 3. In other cases, the quotation is not so explicitly marked. According to the editor of Hansard, in those cases 'we rely on the reporter to recognize when a quotation is being made. It is often easy to spot. There may be a change of tone, the Member can be seen to be carefully reading his notes, when before he was simply referring to them' (Church, personal communication). They will, however, check the quote's accuracy:

We will not print a quotation as a quotation unless we are able to check it ourselves. We do not take a Member's word that the quotation he includes in his notes is accurate. If we cannot check it we put the words in third person. (Church, personal communication)

The issue of whether the quotation really is accurate and from Hansard is a live matter for the Members too. Personal memory, or simple assertion, can be challenged. When it is, it is Hansard that is the authority, as the following example shows:

(2) [Hansard vol. XXX, 26 November 1997, cols. 923–924]

1        Mr. Duncan: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has a  
 2        shopping list, but I am not sure whether, even as Christmas  
 3        comes, he will get any of the things on it. ... Before 1 May,  
 4        when he usually sat at the back of the Opposition Benches,  
 5        he would lambast the Conservative Government in his  
 6        charming way and call on them to do something about the  
 7        coal industry. Now that he sits on the Government Front  
 8        Bench with his Red Box and his ministerial car, he is  
 9        prepared to do absolutely nothing. What he said when in  
 10       opposition in no way marries with what he is pretending or,  
 11       in my view, failing to do as a Minister of the Crown.

- 12 → Mr. Battle: Quote me.  
 13 → Mr. Duncan: We can look in Hansard, which will show  
 14 that the hon. Gentleman called for much to be done. Will  
 15 he write into the record what specific action he proposes  
 16 to take, what money he intends to spend, whom he has  
 17 seen, what he has promised them, and what the Minister  
 18 without Portfolio has told him to do to prevent what  
 19 would otherwise happen to Britain's coal mining industry,  
 20 given the forces of the free market?

The speaker (Duncan) is attempting to show the inconsistency between his opponent's words in the past and his present behavior. It is noteworthy that the target of the talk, Battle, explicitly calls for his tormentor to back up his claims—'Quote me', he challenges. This reveals the underlying expectation that the reference to others, if to be brought off, needs Hansard's authority. Indeed, even Duncan orients to this, in his explicit invocation of Hansard in his attempt to deflect Battle's challenge (line 12). (This is a good point at which to remind the reader that we are not interested in what political sides these two speakers represent, nor even that they are British; we are interested only in the formal features of their talk and, of course, specifically their use of the authorized verbatim record.)

### *Using others' words nonliterally*

Before we get on to see how the recruitment of others' words literally can be turned to advantage, it is worth pausing for a moment just to compare what the rhetorical effect can be of using your opponent's words *without* making a play for their literalness or invoking the public record. We will see that the effect is much more straightforwardly deprecatory, as in the examples which follow.

(3) [Hansard vol. 293, 23 April 1996, col. 311]

- 1 Mr. William Ross: I shall speak on one amendment standing  
 2 in my name and one standing in the names of my hon.  
 3 Friend the Member for Upper Bann and myself. I listened  
 4 → with interest to the remarks of the hon. Member for  
 5 → Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington). *He proposed*  
 6 → *apple pie and motherhood and we moved through pious hope*  
 7 → *back into the age of miracles*. It gives me hope that anything  
 8 is possible, not only in Northern Ireland, but in the House.  
 9 We might even see hon. Members on the two Front Benches

10 agreeing on the things that divide them before we are much  
 11 older if this goes on—but I would not hold my breath.

(4) [Hansard vol. 293, 23 April 1996, col. 307]

1 Mr. Robert McCartney: I am somewhat bemused by the  
 2 concept of consensus. I know the phrase from my experience  
 3 of the law, where the parties to a contract are said to require  
 4 a consensus ad idem, so that they are thinking about the  
 5 same thing when they arrive at the subject matter of their  
 6 → contract. *However, the way in which the hon. Member for*  
 7 → *South Down uses the word 'consensus' suggests that nothing*  
 8 → *can be agreed unless the tiniest minority accepts it.* That is a  
 9 dog-in-the-manger's charter.

We notice in examples (3) and (4) that while alluding to others' talk, the speaker is using the opportunity of paraphrase to redescribe what they say in terms which are loaded with evaluation. In example (3), far from using words which could be heard as literal reported speech or even as neutral indirect reported speech, Ross claims that his opponent 'proposed apple pie and motherhood'. He then assesses the effects of his words with the following description: 'we moved through pious hope back into the age of miracles', and his sarcasm expresses vividly the worthlessness of whatever his opponent said. The paraphrase provides grounds for the subsequent rejection. In example (4), McCartney comments on his opponent's use of a specific word, which he actually reports, *consensus*. This use differs from his own and he formulates it in such a way so as to warrant his claim that what is being proposed is a 'dog-in-the-manger's charter'. Such absurdity put into the mouth of an opponent is (to say the least) not intended to be heard as a literal description of what he said, and its rhetorical effect is, of course, deprecatory.

Those whose words have been so treated in a paraphrase can attend to the attributed absurdity and resist it. Another MP, Soley, does just that in the following case.

(5) [Hansard vol. 293, 23 April 1996, col. 314]

1 Rev. Ian Paisley: I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman  
 2 said about the Anglo-Irish Agreement. If the Anglo-Irish  
 3 Agreement was such a wonderful thing, as he thinks it was,  
 4 and was bringing us away from partition to paradise, why  
 5 are we having this forum? We are told that the forum is to  
 6 seek away away from the Anglo-Irish Agreement, to get—I  
 7 quote—a 'broader' agreement under which people can  
 8 work. If the agreement was such a wonderful panacea for

- 9           our ills, why should we want anything broader?  
 10 → Mr. Soley: *I do not want to rehearse whether the Anglo-Irish*  
 11 → *Agreement was wonderful. I do not claim that it was wonderful.*  
 12 → *I actually said that* there was a change from a policy of crisis  
 13 management to a policy whereby the British Government—  
 14 Labour and Tory—have been prepared to work with the  
 15 Irish Government in solving what is essentially a joint  
 16 problem and in helping the two divided communities in  
 17 Northern Ireland to come together in a political system that  
 18 works. That is why we are here.

Whatever words Soley actually used, Paisley glosses him (in lines 2 and 3) as saying ‘the Anglo-Irish agreement [is] such a wonderful thing ... [it is] bringing us away from partition to paradise’, and he then uses this ironic formulation to deny any need for a forum. In this, as in the preceding cases, it is important to note that far from making a point of quoting exactly what his opponent says, the speaker uses the language of exaggeration and what is called in conversation analytic circles ‘extreme case formulations’ (Pomerantz 1986). As Edwards (2000) says about this sort of extreme description (*every time, top speed, one in a million*, and so on), they are in one sense a curiously vulnerable figure of speech to use: any extreme case can be punctured and rebutted easily and simply. If the Mounties claim ‘we always get our man’, then a single escapee is enough to discredit them. Indeed in the last case we see how easily Soley rebuts Paisley’s claim. All he has to do is make the all-too-plausible point that (of course) he never said such a thing—‘I do not claim that it was wonderful. I actually said that ...’—and he then has an opportunity to restate his position.

But, as Edwards (2000) observes, the point of extreme case formulations is not their literal vulnerability to such simple rebuttal; the speaker means to get across what is *importantly* the case, and may dismiss ‘factual’ rebuttal as irrelevant and pedantic. Vivid and absurd description makes clear what it is that the speaker wants people to see as being the crucial point of what the other said—as Edwards has it, such extreme formulations are understandable ‘not as failed efforts at accurate description but as *it seemed as if*, or *it is essentially so* kinds of proposals’ (Edwards 2000: 359; emphasis in original). So we hear Ross’s ‘apple pie and motherhood’ in example (3) and McCartney’s ‘nothing can be agreed unless the tiniest majority accepts it’ and ‘bringing us ... to paradise’ in example (4) as their attempts to convey not what someone literally said but what they essentially meant. This is a very different way of speaking than making your case *literally*.

*Literal recruitment*

Florid redescription in parliamentary debate of the sort in examples (3) and (4) forms the background against which sober, non-extreme quotation is to be heard. The device of recruiting one's opponent's words literally, by establishing a ground base of authorized quotation, is really a matter of using the words as they were recorded. How this is done, and with what rhetorical effects, is what we now turn to. We organize the exposition according to two crucial elements (the establishment of the quoted speaker as a known antagonist; the assertion of the informativeness of what they are recorded to have said) and one optional one, the dramatization of the quoted speaker's identity.

*Recruiting a speaker who is obviously from the other side*

Let us start with the issue of who the quoted source is. The speaker in the following example is concerned to establish the authority and literalness of his quotation, which is of course the defining feature of literal quotation, and then goes on to explicate the relevance of the quoted source's identity.

(6) [Hansard vol. 302, 3 December 1997, col. 422]

- 1        Mr. Rammell: Some clarity and some facts are welcome in  
 2        the debate. The rhetoric used by the Conservatives is  
 3        important. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and  
 4 → Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) said to the former Prime Minister, the  
 5 → right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), a couple  
 6 → of years ago: *'I hope that my right hon. Friend can influence*  
 7 → *the Government, so that we British can be proud of the things*  
 8 → *that are our heritage. That is completely different from*  
 9 → *spending our time attacking our allies and neighbours for*  
 10 → *what, allegedly, they are doing, because that is xenophobic.'*—  
 11 → [Official Report, 7 February 1996, vol. 271, col. 410.] He  
 12        was not talking about the Labour party or the Liberal  
 13        Democrats: he was talking about the Conservative party  
 14        and Conservative Members. That is why I made the point.

In understanding what is going on in this extract, a bit of background will be helpful. Rammell is a Minister in the Labour Government; the speaker he is quoting (Sir Edward Heath) is known to all not only as a Conservative, but as an ex-Prime Minister. Heath is quoted as directing his speech at the then current Conservative Prime Minister, John Major,

and what he is speaking about—in case there was any ambiguity—is ‘not ... the Labour Party or the Liberal Democrats: he was talking about the Conservative party and Conservative Members’. To quote Heath’s literal words in this way is far more powerful than merely to have referred to his pro-Europeanism (which would have been well known to the House), without specific citation. Rammell has recruited Heath to the service of showing how even the most heavyweight opponent (an ex-Prime Minister, the sort of person who sufficiently out-ranks a serving Prime Minister to offer him advice) agrees with Labour policies.

Here is another example of the recruitment of a heavyweight opponent, this time one who at the time occupied the Ministerial position now occupied by the current speaker, and hence bore the same responsibilities; the issue is the banning of beef on the bone due to health concerns:

- (7) [Hansard vol. XXX, 22 December 1997, col. 694; square brackets show where two sentences and a quote from a scientific report have been cut]

1       Dr John Cunningham: As for what the right hon. Gentleman  
2       said about taking beef off the bone, my wife did a little  
3       research with our family butcher this week. He said that  
4       he sold six or seven T-bones a week. We are talking about  
5       5 per cent. of beef; 95 per cent. is already sold off the bone.  
6       Nothing in what I have decided is going to harm anyone.  
7   →   [...] In June 1994, the right hon. Member for South-West  
8   →   Norfolk (Mrs. Shephard) said that she had to act with  
9   →   ‘*extreme caution in relation to BSE ... to ensure that the*  
10 →   *tissues in which infectivity might potentially occur are*  
11 →   *removed from the human ... food chain.*’—[*Official Report*,  
12       30 June 1994, vol. 245, col. 654.] That was the position of  
13       the Government supported by the right hon. Member for  
14       East Devon (Sir P. Emery). Our position is the same.

Cunningham’s quotation of Shephard in the arrowed lines in example (7) is given extra power by the fact that the latter is not only from the opposing Party, but (something which is not obvious from the extract, but would have been well known to all members of the House) that she was his exact counterpart when her Party was in power. The policies she adhered to then are thus still more apt and relevant to his situation—since they had to be feasible and realistic. Not only an opponent, then, but a specially relevant one is recruited here.

The trick of choosing to quote from a person who is well-fitted as a member of the opposing party can allow an extra layer of comedy, as in this example:

(8) [Hansard vol. *XXX*, 28 October 1996, col. 350]

1 Mr. Straw: I am afraid that that will not do, as I shall show  
 2 that huge parts of the 1996 crime sentencing legislation  
 3 overturn key parts of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, for  
 4 which the Home Secretary voted. It is not a matter of the  
 5 Bill's proposals differing a little in emphasis from the 1991  
 6 legislation: one is a total contradiction of the other. As the  
 7 Secretary of State said, under the new Bill an offender's  
 8 previous convictions will be critical in determining sentence  
 9 length. However, under the 1991 legislation—for which  
 10 the Secretary of State voted—the courts were generally  
 11 banned from taking any account of previous convictions.  
 12 → The then Home Secretary—*that well-known left-winger*,  
 13 → now Lord Waddington—referred to the need to ban courts  
 14 from considering such convictions. He said: 'If an offender  
 15 has already been punished for a previous offence it seems  
 16 unfair and unjust to punish him twice over by increasing  
 17 the penalty for a subsequent offence'.—[*Official Report*,  
 18 20 November 1990, vol. 181, col. 141.] Fixed so-called  
 19 minimum sentences will now be the cornerstone of the  
 20 Government's strategy for punishing the guilty.

Straw treats the Conservative affiliation of his quoted source Waddington as sufficiently obvious to allow him to burlesque it in an absurd inversion: that he is 'that well-known left-winger'. The phrasing of this formulation as an ironic aside resists any hearing as a serious description of Waddington, even for those who have never heard of him.

What do all these examples have in common? They are certainly hearably hostile. Indeed, the verb 'to hansardise' has entered Members' lore to mean 'to use a Member's words against themselves' (we are indebted to the editor of Hansard for this observation, made in a personal communication). But how does it work? Each usage recruits the unchallengeably recorded words of an opponent and emphasizes just how much of an opponent that person is. It is their oppositionality that is the key: having those words said by your opponent immediately debars a whole class of objection, namely that those words are motivated by self-interest. It deprives your current antagonist of the chance to say, as Edwards and Potter have it, 'well, they would say that wouldn't they' as they might have, had it come from an interested party (Edwards and

Potter 1992: 117). The literal recruitment device is a shield of disinterest, a specially forceful version of what Potter calls ‘stake inoculation’ (Potter 1996: 124–128).

Now that we have the basic formula set up, we can accumulate examples to establish the point and get across the variety of ways in which the theme is played out. In every case the thing to watch for is the effort after literal quotation of an established opponent and the protection it offers, and then the particular support it gives the speaker’s own argument.

*What the opponent really believes*

In the next example of direct quotation’s rhetorical effect, the speaker is some way into a long speech in which he lists external bodies which have, according to him, expressed reservations about the Government’s plans for welfare provision. We come to the next in the series of such bodies, the Citizen Advice Bureaux. It is not Waterson’s quotation of the Bureaux that interests us (lines 12 and 14), but that from his opponent, the Government minister, at lines 16 to 22.

(9) [Hansard vol. 302, 10 December 1997, col. 1107]

- 1 Mr Nigel Waterson: ... The citizens advice bureaux are in no
- 2 doubt about the Government’s true motives. ... They point
- 3 out that, in March this year, the Social Security Advisory
- 4 Committee recommended that the then new limits on
- 5 backdating should not be proceeded with. The citizens
- 6 advice bureaux also have sensible things to say about the
- 7 balance to be struck between encouraging take-up and
- 8 limiting backdating. Of course they support the
- 9 Government’s stated wish to improve the system so that
- 10 people understand what they are entitled to—who would
- 11 not?—but they conclude, and cite a number of cases
- 12 in support of their view, that ‘it is only too evident that
- 13 back-dating provisions are an essential “back-stop” to
- 14 the present fragmented benefit structure’. I suspect that,
- 15 deep down, the Minister agrees with that view. Indeed,
- 16 → he admitted as much in Committee, during a debate on
- 17 → a quite different clause, when he said: ‘*if any amendment*
- 18 → *imposed such a requirement on us now, the problems*
- 19 → *of administration—which is already complex, bureaucratic*
- 20 → *and inefficient—would be exacerbated, as our current systems*
- 21 → *cannot always work in the integrated fashion to which*
- 22 → *we aspire.*’—[Official Report, Standing Committee B,

23 28 October 1997; col. 48.] That was a very clear statement  
 24 by the Minister of the position as he saw it.

We note in passing the speaker's positive endorsement of the body he is citing (it 'has sensible things to say'; it is perspicacious enough to be 'in no doubt about the Government's true motives'). What interests us is his recruitment of the Minister's words not simply to bolster his and the Bureaux's point, but to demonstrate that the Minister really agrees with him '*deep down*' (line 15). The evidence comes from no less a place than, as we are now well used to seeing, Hansard's verbatim record of the Minister's own words, transcribed for posterity in lines 16 to 22. Indeed, the trope works so well by itself that that Waterson can round things off with the mere bathetic gloss 'That was a very clear statement', and the hearer is left in no doubt about the point being made: that Waterson's opponent himself agrees with Waterson.

Of course, what the opponent 'really believes' can be turned against him or her in other ways, and perhaps the most prevalent in Parliamentary argument is the claim that the other party has been inconsistent (or worse). Consider this extended example:

(10) [Hansard vol. XXX, 18 December 1997, cols. 537–538.]

1 Mr. William Thompson (West Tyrone): When we look up  
 2 the Committee stage of the 1986 Act, we find that the  
 3 present Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport,  
 4 the right hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury  
 5 (Mr. Smith), opposed the measures greatly. He said that  
 6 they were drawn from the law in South Africa and told us  
 7 that '*The White Paper outlines some of the Government's*  
 8 *reasons for the inclusion of the power, which even President*  
 9 *Botha has not yet taken it upon himself to use.*'—[*Official*  
 10 *Report, Standing Committee G, 27 February 1986; col. 534.*]  
 11 When we came to the final stages of the Bill, the right  
 12 hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman),  
 13 then the Opposition spokesmen, said:  
 14 '*We still dislike some of part I, and especially some of part*  
 15 *II, considerably. I give notice to the Minister and his*  
 16 *officials that an incoming Labour Government after the*  
 17 *general election will repeal most of the contentious aspects*  
 18 *of part II and consider part I.*'—[*Official Report, 30 April*  
 19 *1986, vol. 96, col. 1063.*] After some years, the Labour  
 20 party has arrived in government. Are the Labour  
 21 Government going to repeal the Public Order Act 1986,  
 22 because they find that the conditions and restrictions

23           therein are as unacceptable now as they were then? In  
 24           1986, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) stated:  
 25           ‘In 1979 the Government claimed that they would set the  
 26           people free. They talked about law and order and said that  
 27           they would impose a short, sharp shock on those who were  
 28           supposed to be upsetting society at that time. After seven  
 29           years, the Government have not set the people free.’  
 30           He went on to say he was happy that his right hon.  
 31           Friend the Member for Gorton had said that parts of  
 32           the legislation would be replaced by a future Labour  
 33           Government because ‘*the legislation attacks civil liberties*’  
 34           —[*Official Report*, 30 April 1986, vol. 96, col. 1068.]  
 35       → Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I am not totally aware of  
 36       → the circumstances, but one thing I do know is that today  
 37       → we have an entirely different Bill before us, which cannot  
 38       → in any way be described as comparable with the 1986 Act.

What Thompson is up to is laying before the House a series of quotations which reveal the current Government to have so changed their position as to be hearably hypocritical—saying one thing and doing another. The repeated quotations, at lines 7 to 10, 14 and 16, 25 to 29, and 31 and 34, work to drive the source deep into enemy territory, and end with a quote from a member visibly present in the house (Skinner). Note how this Labour MP (although not a Minister) attempts to rebut the accusation not by challenging the quotation (as we have seen, this never happens when Hansard is accurately quoted), but by denying its relevance to the situation at hand—the circumstances today ‘cannot in any way be described as comparable with the 1986 Act’, lines 37 and 38).

### *The mystery source*

In the final set of cases we want to look at, we see the speaker dramatize the identity of the source quoted. In the first example, an ex-Home secretary is complaining about the short time available to debate a complex bill proposed by the Government. Note that, unlike all the previous examples so far, here the speaker does *not* make a point of identifying, in advance, the source of what he is about to quote. That turns out not to be accidental.

(11) [Hansard vol. 303, 17 December 1997, cols. 414–415.]

1           Mr Michael Howard: Qualified majority voting, the  
 2           co-decision procedure, institutional change, flexibility, the  
 3           free movement of people, discrimination, subsidiarity,  
 4           proportionality and the location of European institutions

5 are all vital issues of constitutional importance, and the  
 6 Government deem it fit to debate them, if at all, for just a  
 7 few hours. *'Guillotines can be justified only where an*  
 8 *Opposition have filibustered a Bill, where they have refused*  
 9 *all reasonable suggestions to agree a timetable, or where*  
 10 *there is no possibility of the Government getting their*  
 11 → *business through at reasonable speed without a guillotine.'*—  
 12 → [Official Report, 1 February 1988, vol. 126, col. 756.] Those  
 13 → are not my words: they are the words of the present  
 14 Home Secretary. I challenge the Foreign Secretary to tell  
 15 the House which, if any, of those conditions have been  
 16 fulfilled in this case. There has been no question of a  
 17 filibuster, no suggestion of agreeing a timetable has been  
 18 put to us, and there is absolutely no reason why the  
 19 Government should not get their business through at  
 20 reasonable speed without the guillotine.

The punch, of course, comes in lines 11 and 13, where the identity of the quoted person is revealed not to be the speaker himself, but none other than his current antagonist, 'the present Home Secretary'. Thus the implications of the quoted words—that they are evidence not merely of the speaker's own, obviously partial, line but also of his opponent's—are given dramatic stage lighting. The source stands revealed after the audience has been ostensibly puzzled and teased by a mystery. Of course, given the public nature of this genre and its transparency to its hearers, the revelation that the person quoted is the speaker's opponent is something of an open secret: yet the trick retains its power, just as any properly executed stagecraft does.

The next example is from the same debate, and shows a still more elaborate version of the mystery source staging than that in example (11). Notice that the upcoming quote is attributed only to 'an experienced member', and that the words of this mysterious person are teasingly reported a snippet at a time:

(12) [Hansard vol. 303, 17 December 1997, col. 446]

1 Mr. Gary Streeter (South-West Devon): On 13 January  
 2 1994, an experienced Member stood at the Opposition  
 3 Dispatch Box and complained that in introducing a  
 4 → timetable motion the then Government showed '*a callous*  
 5 → *disregard for our democratic procedures*'. The hon.  
 6 Gentleman protested:  
 7 → '*The way in which the Government have tried to force*  
 8 → *through the business is a contempt of the House.*' He added:

- 9 → ‘The procedure that we are now discussing is completely  
 10 → unnecessary. We are using time to discuss the guillotine  
 11 → motion that we could have used to discuss aspects of the Bill  
 12 → which are important to hon. Members.’ The hon.  
 13 Gentleman described the then Government’s approach as  
 14 an ‘*affront to democracy*’. He attacked the Government’s  
 15 conduct, saying that it had ‘*been wholly reprehensible  
 16 and unacceptable*’.—[*Official Report*, 13 January 1994,  
 17 vol. 235, cols. 384–387.]  
 18 → That hon. Gentleman was the Minister of State, Foreign  
 19 → and Commonwealth Office, the hon. Member for  
 20 → Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson), the very  
 21 → person who will respond to the debate on behalf of the  
 22 → Government and force the guillotine on us.

Streeter’s introduction of his mystery source must, we imagine, have puzzled very few of his listeners. The whole trajectory of his account is towards hostile quotation and it will probably have surprised no-one that the source eventually revealed in lines 18 to 22 is indeed a member of the opposing party (and, indeed, the Minister whose bill this now is, the ‘very person who will respond to the debate on behalf of the Government’, lines 20–22). Doling out the quotation in five separate rations perhaps adds to the theatrical suspense, but its true rhetorical effect is to further enhance the crucial element of the quoted source’s counterintuitive identity.

### *Comparative cases*

We have seen, in the foregoing, literal recruitment work to emphasize the identity of the quoted person, to dramatize that identity, and to reveal their true position. All of these rhetorical effects work on certain normative expectations in the way literal recruitment works. We can use occasions on which the polish slips to reveal the operation of that expectation. The following examples show Parliamentarians orienting to the expectations that quotation is accurate, hostile, and, finally, that it does indeed come from an opponent.

#### 1. *Hostile intent*

In the first case, we see a speaker go out of his way to be seen to try and delete the hostile implications of quoting others:

(13) [Hansard vol. XXX, 25 November 1997, col. 819]

- 1 Sir Brian Mawhinney: ... At the risk of upsetting traditionalists,
- 2 I shall depart for a moment from the normal confrontational

3 tone of our debates in the House and pay a genuine tribute to  
 4 the Home Secretary. It was courageous and typically honest of  
 5 him to state quite openly what he has stated frequently in the  
 6 past, and what all hon. Members know to be true: when it  
 7 comes to elections to the House, he has no great love of any  
 8 form of proportional representation. Hon. Members will  
 9 remember that fact, which I do not mention in any aggressive  
 10 sense. I pay tribute to him.

The speaker's own acknowledgement that what he is doing is unusual, and the explicit praise of his opponent as 'courageous and typically honest', underline the more usual default implications that quoting others is normally understood to involve attacking them.

## 2. False quotation

Here we see an exchange in which a putative quote is made, and resisted.

(14) [Hansard vol. XXX, 11 November 1996, col. 93]

1 Mr Pickthall: The Government want to create a system  
 2 in which schools select pupils—that cannot be reiterated  
 3 too often—and in which only a minority of parents and  
 4 pupils will select their schools. In the Queen's Speech  
 5 debate on education, the hon. Member for Rugby and  
 6 Kenilworth said:  
 7 'Schools should have a greater say in choosing the children  
 8 whom they take in.'  
 9 → Mr. Pawsey: That was not me.  
 10 → Mr. Pickthall: I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon; it  
 11 was the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden  
 12 (Dame A. Rumbold). The hon. Gentleman in fact said:  
 13 → '*The new education Bill will give schools greater freedom to*  
 14 → *select pupils by ability.*'—[*Official Report*, 29 October 1996,  
 15 vol. 284, cols. 483, 502.]

The fact that Pawsey should counter the alleged quotation shows his concern for (his orientation to, in conversation-analytic terms with less suggestion of internal motivation) the implications of being quoted. What is even more interesting is that only when Pickthall corrects himself and the correct citation is made does the Hansard reference appear in the record.

## 3. Denying the identity of the quoted source as the speaker's opponent

We end with a telling failing case—that is, an occasion on which things patently do not go to plan, and we have an apparent failure to bring off



25	TB	= he's a <u>Tory</u>
26	MH	apparent triumph =
27	TB	= he's a <u>Tory</u>
28	MH	apparent triumph =
29	TB	= he's a <u>Tory</u>
30	PS	wham why why did why did you why did
31		you [se
32	TB	[well I want everyone to know they
33		might not know he's a Tory (.0.5) go on

Note the canonical features of the recruitment: the explicit invocation of an authorized source of the words (here, again, Hansard, even though we are now in a television studio); the dramatically explicit claim that this is a literal quotation (Heseltine punctiliously asks permission to quote, and then names the date as if reading from the very pages of Hansard there and then); and the clear implication that this is from Heseltine's opponent and a member of his current opponent's (i.e., Benn's) own party.

But the quotation is capsized by Benn's intervention. He seizes his moment to interject (at line 15), 'a *Tory* (1.0) he's a *Tory*', as a parenthesis in Heseltine's monologue. If this is conceded, it wholly deflates the point Heseltine was trying to make, that the words he is about to quote are not from a Tory (one of his own) but from a Labour opponent. Indeed, he goes out of his way to break off from his monologue's trajectory and try to establish that 'Dick Marsh (.) Dick Marsh was the *Labour Minister* when this'. The audience laughter suggests that it treats this as what we might gloss as knockabout political humor, but what we notice is the very precise targeting by Benn, and the point of active resistance by Heseltine, of the crucial issue of who, exactly, Heseltine is quoting—friend or foe. The fact that they fight over it is good evidence that it is a valuable resource. Were Benn to get across his point that Marsh was not in fact the opponent Heseltine claims him to be, Heseltine's rhetorical wind would be taken from his sails.

## Conclusion

We have analyzed here a number of arguments which took place in the British House of Commons, and one from a television political discussion program. What we set out to do was to show how people could make use of a special feature of their discursive world, namely the existence of a public, authorized record of what their opponents have said, on the

record. The examples came from the British House of Commons, but in principle the verbatim record of other parliaments is available to be used in similar ways.

Literal recruitment works to provide an unchallengeable, impartial, and counterintuitive source for the speaker's position. There are a number of elements to how it works. Using the public record renders the speaker's words unchallengeable by virtue of public convention, and we showed a corroborating example of a case where the speaker did not offer proper quotation (example [2]) and was subsequently challenged. Using the words of a political opponent disarms any objection that the words issue from a partial or interested source (as discussed by Edwards and Potter 1992 and Dickerson 1997), and we saw examples of speakers underlining the weight of the opponent and their prototypicality as a member of the opposing Party (examples [5] and [6]), or one whose status as such is emphasized as in example (7) or comically burlesqued, as in example (8). The exactitude and authority of the quote can be used to reveal the 'truth' of the case, even to go so far as to reveal what the opponent really thinks 'deep down' (as in examples [9] and [10]). The identity of the quoted person can also be held back to upgrade its importance by casting it as a 'mystery', and, in examples (11) and (12), we saw how speakers revealed the source dramatically; but the oppositional identity of the quoted source can also be resisted (example [15]). Examples (14) and (15) showed members' orientations to the normative expectations that suffuse the Parliamentary scene, and make literal quotation work as a hostile, unchallengeable, proof of the rightness of the speaker's case—even the opposition agrees with it.

Is this rhetorical device unique to the British parliamentary milieu? It is an open question whether its use extends to parliamentary chambers other than the British House of Commons (the database examined in this article) but, even outside such special speech communities, in one sense the answer is no. In mundane conversations people report what others had said, and use the reports to support their arguments. There is no reason why the 'even our enemies would say this' device could not be used. Certainly it is on a par with a catalogue of other ways of protecting one's 'stake and interest' (as the discursive psychologist Potter puts it: see especially Potter [1996: chapter 5]). But there are some important differences, which imply that the device might work differently as a tool in the parliamentary context than in mundane conversations. One could say that the rhetorical device we have described is, logically speaking, a weak argument, in fact an *ad hominem* fallacy. Believe that the earth is flat and the center of the solar system because the church

says so. My argument is right, and yours is wrong because somebody else—even you yourself, or someone of your party—believes what I do. My dispositions are right because even my enemy has them. But then, the House of Commons conducts itself as a partisan institution. Oppositions and alliances are explicit, matters of common display and even partly embodied in seating arrangements. The winning of arguments may lie in how the votes are cast. In this context, using the positions of relevant others to warrant one's argument is exactly appropriate. The persuasiveness and the effects of the turn of argument depend on the language game in which it is used. When the language game explicitly privileges words from the written record, it turns those words into a weapon more forceful than they would have been if lost to the air.

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