Written submission from DH Amory

My comments are as follows, based on the bill as published:

Part 2. The Land Commission and its associated secretariat will be given duties that accountable Scottish ministers, civil servants, and parliamentarians should be carrying out. The associated expense would be better used helping farmers directly.

The powers and costs of any Commission must be very tightly drawn.

Part 5, sections 38-65. Right to Buy.

Section 42: Scottish ministers have too much discretion, eg 42(8) gives ministers the right to modify important sections of primary legislation by means of regulations.

Section 47: There should be an additional test that any application to buy must be accompanied by clear evidence of long term economic viability and sustainability following a change to community ownership. Scottish ministers must also satisfy themselves that the purchasing body has the necessary expertise to manage the land successfully in the long term.

Part 6. Sporting rates. Very few deer forests or upland estates do other than return an annual financial loss. The rating of shootings and deer forests will have the effect of further reducing the ability of such units to employ people, or to carry out maintenance, deer culling or habitat management.

Tenancy rights, general: The bill as drafted does nothing to give land owners confidence that contracts entered into will be respected in future. The result is likely to be a continuing decline in the availability of let land.