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The Queen's speech subtext [1]

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There were no surprises in the content of the Queen's Speech, since it had been widely leaked in the Sunday papers. The surprise was in the subtext. Some had expected a hesitant, cobbled-together production by a government looking to the short term. Instead it had all the hallmarks of a government that expects to be around for the long term.

Only two weeks ago people thought the coalition might be short-lived, with a second election coming before the year's end. The Queen's Speech outlined a radical programme from a government that expects to deliver. The bills trailed in it are big meaty ones that will transform Britain and the way it is run. The Education Bills could finally create schools that parents value, while the Great Repeals Bill offers excellent scope to undo a significant part of the Big Brother state that was foisted upon us.

The Parliamentary Reform Bill could give us a leaner, more representative House of Commons and a wholly new House of Lords. Fixed terms diminish the power of Prime Ministers, and recall procedures allow for some comeback on MPs who abuse. All in all, it is a radical, even bold, set of proposals from a government which clearly thinks it is going to last.

The brave new dawn of the Blair administration did not deliver all that much, but this partnership thrown together in haste and necessity might actually end up delivering more valuable and lasting reforms.

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