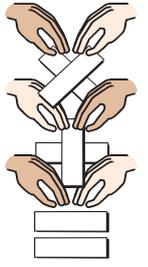


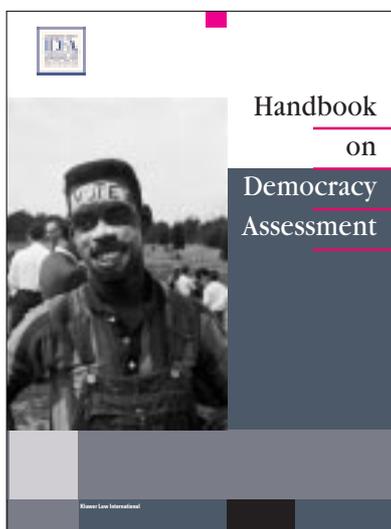
# WAR AND PEACE: EXECUTIVE DEMOCRACY IN ACTION



## DEMOCRATIC AUDIT

Democratic Audit has just published a systematic audit of British democracy, *Democracy under Blair* (Politico's, £12.99), revised to place the invasion of Iraq in democratic perspective. The Audit is a proactive research body that assesses the quality of democracy and human rights in the UK and around the world. Its most immediate aims, far from realised, are first to give British citizens genuine political influence and control within a modern democratic state; and secondly, to empower citizens in democracies around the world to examine the strengths and weaknesses of their democratic arrangements and thus to facilitate their reform.

The Human Rights Centre and Audit share an ethos of public engagement. The Centre carries out practical human rights work around the world; and scholars from Essex make a significant contribution to the Audit's work. But the Audit is a voluntary consortium of scholars from other universities as well, lawyers, journalists and others who come together to study the quality of democracy in the UK. There are significant links with political scientists, academic lawyers, sociologists and others from the London School of Economics, Birkbeck and University Colleges, London, the Universities of Leeds, Bradford, Durham, and Westminster, and other bodies such as Democratic Dialogue, Belfast.



The Audit's pioneering work on democracy assessment has been developed through the inter-governmental body, International IDEA (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance), so that it can be used in any democracy in the world. IDEA has conducted democracy

assessments by in-country teams in eight nations in association with David Beetham, the originator of the assessment framework, the Audit's director Stuart Weir and colleagues at Leeds University. Kluwer Law International has published *The IDEA Handbook on Democracy Assessment* and *The State of Democracy*, a comparative report. Democratic Audit has also issued expert reports on UK elections, quangos and other democratic issues and takes on consultancy, education and training work in the UK and abroad for the EU, UNDP, the Department for International Development, and others.

Democratic Audit is currently developing a new audit of economic and social rights in the United Kingdom, drawing upon the United Nations' economic and social rights instruments, International Labour Organisation conventions and developing European Union standards. The intention is to produce a landmark study that will emphasise the significance of economic and social rights to modern democracy.

## CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE UNDER BLAIR GOVERNMENT SINCE 1997

- The Human Rights Act 1998 introduces the European Convention on Human Rights into British law and for the first time provides systematic legal underpinning of civil and political rights in the UK
  - A Joint Committee on Human Rights is set up in Parliament to examine all Bills for compliance with the Human Rights Act and to review progress on the Act's objectives
  - New legislation in 2001 requires almost all public bodies to draw up plans to eradicate institutional racism from their operations and to promote good race relations
  - Power is devolved to new administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland after referendums. The elections to the Scottish Parliament and both assemblies use proportional systems
  - The Peace Agreement in Northern Ireland inaugurates unstable power-sharing administration, a new human rights regime (with a Human Rights Commission), cautious police reforms and a strong new Ombudsman for police complaints
  - Regional development agencies and regional chambers established in English regions; a white paper proposes elected assemblies in English regions
  - The government signs the Council of Europe Charter for Local Self-Government and introduces new governing arrangements and constitutions into local government. Local populations are given the chance to opt for mayor in a referendum
  - The government agrees to the EU Amsterdam Treaty (under European Communities (Amendment) Act 1998)
  - The 1998 elections to the European Parliament are held using a closed List proportional representation system
  - The new London mayoralty and Greater London assembly are set up after a referendum. The mayoral vote is conducted under the Supplementary Vote and assembly elections under the proportional AMS system
  - Most hereditary peers are removed from House of Lords and the Wakeham Commission is established to chart further reform. A Joint Committee of both Houses is now charged with considering further reform, especially the balance between appointed and elected members
  - A Select Committee on the Constitution set up in Lords to keep constitutional change under review and to examine the constitutional implications of all public Bills
  - A Modernisation Committee under the Leader of the House initiates reforms in the conduct of the Commons facilitating the progress of government legislation, strengthening select committees and reforming sitting hours
  - The House of Commons agrees a reform package to strengthen the role of select committees, but rejects a proposal for a new committee of senior MPs to take responsibility for selecting their members from the whips
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000 establishes a statutory right of access to official information which is yet to come into force
- The Electoral Commission is established in 2000 to register political parties, to oversee a new transparent regime for donations, to control election spending and to oversee and review the conduct of elections and referendums. New limits are set for undeclared donations and party and "third party" spending on election campaigns
  - An official commission under Lord Jenkins proposes a new "mixed" electoral system for Westminster elections, but the promised referendum on reform has not yet been held
  - A reform of the law gives political parties leave to adopt measures of positive discrimination to raise the proportion of women in Parliament
  - Reforms to registration and voting procedures encourage and experiments with postal and electronic voting, etc, are introduced to facilitate wider registration and participation in voting. Homeless people and other excluded groups are given an effective right to vote

# EXECUTIVE DEMOCRACY IN BRITAIN

What does the invasion of Iraq tell us about the state of our democracy? It is argued that the decision-making process showed that it is in fine working order, with Blair not relying on the Royal Prerogative to take the UK into war unilaterally, but winning over the cabinet, Parliament and ultimately the country.

But this is a formalistic and disingenuous account. The real decision to remove Saddam Hussein by force was taken by the Prime Minister and President Bush long before the final Parliamentary vote on 18 March 2003. Labour MPs in the majority party were confronted then by a stark choice – vote for war or the fall of their government – accompanied by false intelligence information, manipulation and arm-twisting.

In fact, the whole decision-making process acted as a barium meal, starkly revealing the realities of what the late Lord Hailsham described as “elective dictatorship” and Jack Straw more recently as “executive democracy”. The absences of effective democratic checks and balances allows Blair, like Mrs Thatcher and other predecessors before him, to force his own personal policies through.

Two obsolete features of our constitutional arrangements combine to create the UK’s overweening political executive – the partnership of the elected majority party and the Whitehall bureaucracy. First, the executive’s powers – and especially those ministers hold under the “royal prerogative” – are neither defined nor governed by a constitution or in law; their flexibility and official secrecy secure executive dominion at the centre. Second, the electoral system generally places one or other main party in power with a swollen disproportionate majority in the Commons, thus giving its leaders broadly unchallengeable legislative as well as executive power.

The decision to join the US invasion of Iraq revealed other aspects of the executive’s power over Parliament. The government’s sole right of recall of Parliament allowed it to manage and muddy public debate, at a time of unprecedented popular interest, unchallenged by MPs in the House, denying people the mature and open discussion that their interest demanded and giving MPs their say when it was too late to alter the substantial decision. The crucial issue of the legality of the invasion was justified solely by an unseen legal opinion by the Attorney-General, a peer who is a personal appointee of the Prime Minister. Parliament itself has no Legal Counsel nor the right to commission its own legal opinion.

The invasion highlights the Jekyll and Hyde nature of Labour government since 1997. On the one hand, this has been a reforming government (see page 2 for a list of its most prominent constitutional reforms). On the other hand, it has jealously guarded the ancient and flexible powers that make the executive all-powerful and deny open, accountable and representative

government to British citizens.

At the same time, the war against Iraq raises a second major question about the quality of British democracy. *Democracy under Blair* (Politico’s, £12.99) examines how far the United Kingdom acts democratically abroad and questions how free our rulers are from subordination to the United States. The principal justification for invading Iraq was the danger to the west and the world posed by Iraq’s undeclared possession of weapons of mass destruction. But as US General Wesley Clark has said in terms: “The fight was never just about weapons of mass destruction, whatever the rhetoric. Rather the war was the inauguration of a new US strategy for the region” (*The Times*, 1 May 2003). Arguably in this cause the UK has broken international law and undermined the authority of the United Nations.

It is true, as we say, that Labour has been a reforming government. Two of the major reforms listed on page 2 do substantially compromise the executive’s powers: the Human Rights Act, which incorporates civil and political rights protected by the European Convention on Human Rights into British law; and devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. But the cabinet insisted on retaining Parliamentary sovereignty, thus protecting government legislation that infringed upon civil or political rights from being outlawed by the courts. The executive also holds onto most major areas of policy, including basic taxation (Scotland has only a marginal right to vary income tax) and benefits and the resources on which the devolved administrations rely.

But the government has turned its back on pre-election pledges to share official information with the public. It has put access to official information on to a statutory basis, but specifies no fewer than 36 strict exceptions to disclosing information – in ten cases, to whole categories of information. Moreover, the Official Secrets Act and some 300 other acts and orders prohibit the disclosure of other information. The promise to hold a referendum on reform of first-past-the-post elections to Westminster has been postponed, quite possibly for ever, since the current system has not only given Labour huge majorities in the Commons – and thus executive and legislative power – but is likely to continue doing so. The prospect of prolonged single-party rule, quite unrepresentative of people’s political choices, clearly damages parliamentary democracy in Britain. Some earlier pledges – for example, to replace the shadowy royal prerogative powers with codified powers for ministers set out in law – have been entirely abandoned.

Finally, alongside executive dominion over Parliament a parallel, and associated, hazard to parliamentary democracy is emerging. Turnout at all elections in the UK is falling, as is turnout almost everywhere, but here it is falling faster.

EXECUTIVE DEMOCRACY

Popular belief and participation in formal politics in the UK is haemorrhaging – most damagingly among young people. At the last election, less than 60 per cent of registered voters bothered to vote. Formally, Labour won a landslide in seats. But not in votes; the “non-Voting Party” (i.e., non-voters) eclipsed Blair by 15 per cent. Thus Parliament is losing its authority at both ends of the scale – it is too weak to check the executive above and its shrinking electoral base below gives it less legitimacy when it seeks to do so.

## DEMOCRACY UNDER BLAIR

Democracy under Blair is the second “audit” of the state of democracy in this country. The first was published in two volumes towards the end of the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> Thus the current audit allows us to assess the impact of reforms, change and continuity on our public and political life since 1997 from a democratic perspective.

As in the first two-part audit, the starting point for our assessment is with the key democratic principles of popular control and political equality: that is, that ultimately the people should control our political decision-makers and the decisions they take; and that we should all be equal in the exercise of that control.

We also reject any notion of a perfect democracy. We see democracy as a continuum: any democracy may be more or less democratic than others, and usually more or less democratic in this aspect or that. We use the findings of the first audit as one bench-mark against which to assess the reforms and changes which have taken place since 1997. But we also check practice in the UK against the norms and best practice of modern democracies, and more specifically, other EU nations.

The new audit differs from the first in several key respects. We cover a wider range of aspects of democratic life and use a much more comprehensive framework of questions to be addressed. The expanded framework comprises 14 sections covering every aspect of democracy. Each section contains a list of questions that the audit aims to answer.

Most of these sections cover ground in common with the first UK audit. But whereas previously we considered democratic arrangements purely within the UK, we no longer treat the UK as an island entire unto itself. We look at the accountability of EU institutions to UK ministers and Parliament. We also address the international dimensions of the UK's democracy. The point here is not only to identify the extent to which British policymaking is limited or compromised by bodies external to the UK, but also to assess how consistently the UK supports democracy, equality and human rights abroad. Here we also inevitably question the accountability of those who determine the UK's policies in the international sphere.

<sup>1</sup> *The Three Pillars of Liberty: Securing Political Rights and Freedom in the UK*, Klug, Stamer and Weir, Routledge, 1996; and *Political Power and Democratic Control in Britain*, Weir and Beetham, Routledge, 1999

In domestic policy, we now consider economic and social rights as well as civil and political rights – the rationale being that people cannot exercise their civil and political rights fully in practice if they cannot share in the social and economic life of the community. We also now examine the extent of corruption in the UK – an issue that has become far more visible since the mid-1990s.

## THE DEMOCRATIC AUDIT IN BRIEF

This leaflet presents here the main findings of the 2002 audit in brief. The illustrative “target” diagram (right) compares the state of democracy in 1997 with the position now, after five years of Labour government. On pages 5-8, we go on to explain the “scores” that we have given both the Conservatives (up to May 1997) and Labour government (1997-2002) on the target board.

The scores are based on the 14 detailed qualitative and quantitative assessments set out in *Democracy under Blair*. In this section of the leaflet, we present brief summaries of the main findings to explain the respective scores of the Conservatives and Labour on 18 indices. These summaries also serve as a more detailed guide to the findings of the book. The scores and the brief summaries are not set against notions of a perfect democracy; the perspective here is best practice in European and other modern democracies.

The authors of *Democracy under Blair* – all of us practitioners in the study and practice of democracy and human rights – are responsible for the scores on the target diagram. We are Professor David Beetham formerly head of the Centre for Democratisation Studies, University of Leeds; Iain Byrne, of Interights; Pauline Ngan, research assistant to Dr Tony Wright MP; and Professor Stuart Weir, director of Democratic Audit.

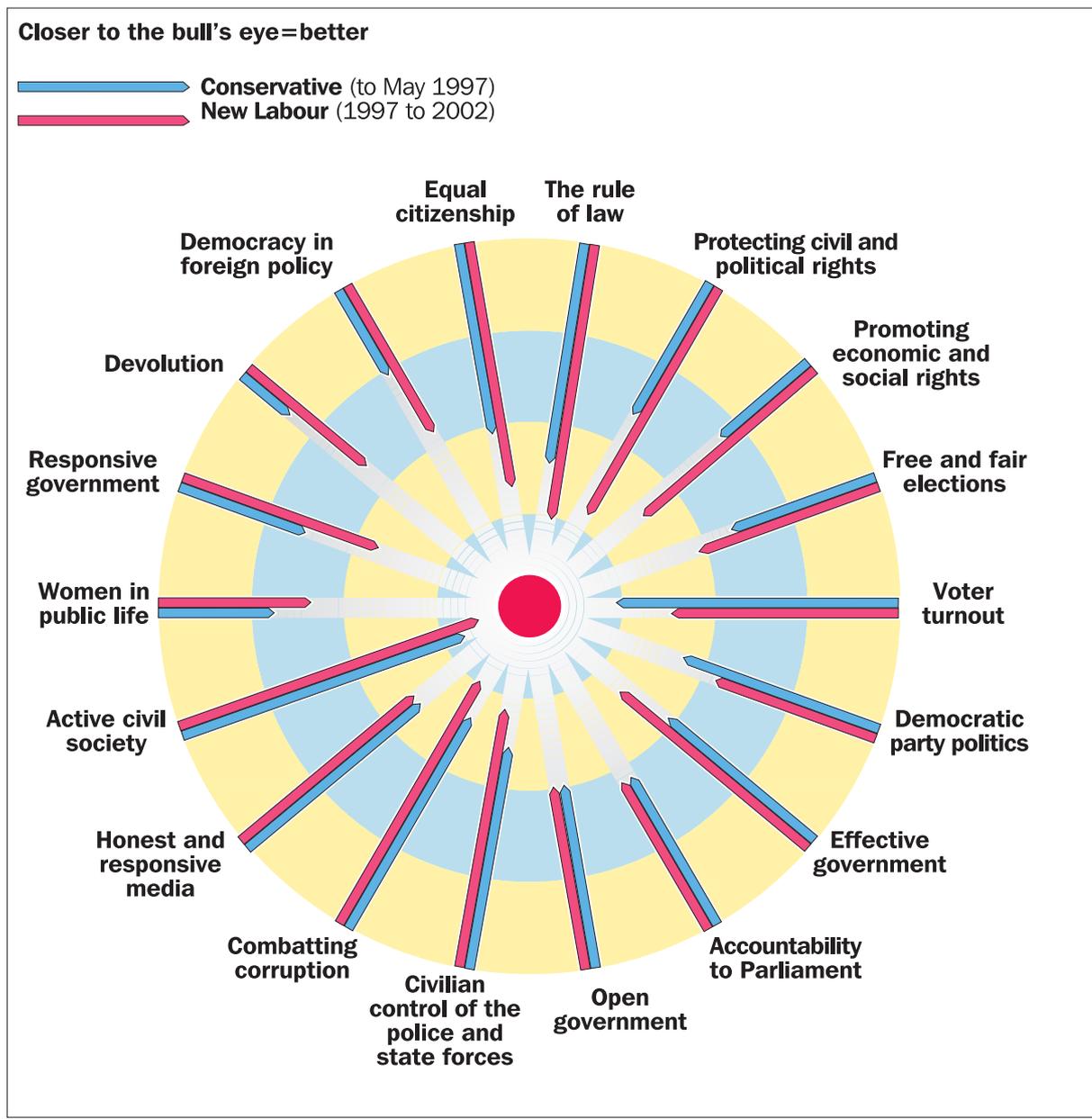
These are the considerations we had in mind in scoring the state of democracy under the two parties:

### Equal citizenship

Most British people are formally citizens of the UK and EU and share a basic right to reside in and return to the UK with other EU citizens. Legally they are subjects of the Crown and enjoy no legal statement of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Decisions on asylum, immigration, settlement and naturalisation are at the discretion of the Home Office whose officials in practice discriminate on grounds of ethnicity and national origin. The failure of successive governments to reconcile international obligations on asylum with a hostile domestic press and public opinion has created an inefficient and unfair asylum system, characterised by deterrents, delays, detentions and dispersal policies.

### The rule of law

Formally everyone in the UK is entitled to equal treatment under the law and equal



access to justice. Racial and ethnic minorities experience discrimination at the hands of the police and courts, as in other public services, but the government has now placed all public bodies under a duty to provide equal opportunities. Access to civil justice is limited by a new legal aid scheme and criminal justice is marred by incompetent investigations and unlawful convictions. The judiciary is socially unrepresentative, but fiercely independent, though the multiple roles of the Lord Chancellor compromise its integrity. Sectarian violence in Northern Ireland and other forms of lawlessness stain Britain's record.

**Protecting civil and political rights**  
 The Human Rights Act 1998 has remedied the systematic inadequacies in the protection given to civil and political rights up to 1997. But freedom of expression is limited by libel and blasphemy laws; anti-terrorism laws since 1997 have expanded police powers; foreign nationals may be imprisoned without charge or trial; and the government is gradually accruing greater powers of surveillance (through the EU as well through domestic law and practice).

**Promoting economic and social rights**  
 Poverty and inequality run deeper in the UK than in any comparable EU nation. Nearly one in four people live under the official EU poverty line. Since 1997, the Labour government has sought to address the accumulated legacy of distress and disadvantage through targeted measures and increases in employment; and is further committed to eradicating child poverty by 2020 Major reform programmes in the NHS and schools are underway. But ethnic minorities suffer from multiple discriminations and disadvantages. The right to strike is unprotected in law. Our scoring reflects the continuing effects of the Thatcher era and the higher standards of social protection, health services and worker and trade-union rights in other EU nations.

**Free and fair elections**  
 Parliamentary elections are grossly disproportionate and regularly return one of the two larger parties to power with a large majority in the popular chamber won on a minority of the popular vote (in 2001, Labour won a huge 166-seat majority over all other parties in the

House of Commons on just 44 per cent of a falling popular vote). The second chamber is an entirely unelected body. Proportional elections – the norm in Europe – have been introduced for the newly-devolved Scottish Parliament and assemblies and European Parliament, but a promised referendum on electoral reform for Westminster has been kicked into touch. Reforms under Labour have enfranchised excluded people, like the homeless, opened up voting generally, and established a body to oversee elections and referendums. The two main parties retain a huge advantage in funding and media coverage at parliamentary elections; the Prime Minister retains the power to fix the date of the election in the governing party's interests; and his government has shamelessly abused its powers to employ government advertising in its electoral interests.

### **Voter turnout**

The public's disillusion with party politics is reflected in the falling turnout in most elections. In 2001, the turnout was the lowest ever since the advent of universal adult suffrage at 59.4 per cent of the registered electorate; in 1997, the turnout was 71.4 per cent. Just 44.4 million people were registered to vote. Disillusion is common throughout democratic states, but the UK's figures are among the lowest in the EU. In the 1997 election, non-voters came second to Labour and were just 2 per cent of the vote behind; in 2001, the "Non-Voting Party" won a huge 15 per cent victory over Labour that quite eclipsed Blair's formal landslide.

### **Democratic party politics**

UK parties are small by European standards and their memberships are falling. The electoral system and strong party discipline make the two dominant parties formidably efficient at forming and sustaining governments in office, but at the expense of representative government and more pluralist party politics at Westminster. The parties must now register to take part in elections, but largely to ensure their financial probity and to enforce rules on spending and donations. Internally the parties are run by small oligarchies that observe quasi-democratic practices; and increasingly rely on large donations from individuals for their finances.

### **Effective government**

Governments in the UK are traditionally made "strong" through their unearned majorities in the House of Commons. In practice, their majority power makes Parliament and its law-making powers subordinate to their will; and since Parliament's legal sovereignty is at their disposal, raises them above the judiciary. Recent governments have centralised power and their legislation, policies and actions are largely unchallenged in Parliament and elsewhere. It is acknowledged that current legisla-

tion, poorly framed and ill-thought-through, goes through Parliament unchecked. But the prevalence of "policy disasters" – like the poll tax, the BSE/CJD scandal, rail privatisation, the Millennium Dome, the A and AS level exam fiasco, and so on – is not yet so obvious. Government in the UK suffers from being unrepresentative, over-powerful, centralist and largely unchecked. It may be strong, but it is also not effective.

### **Accountability to Parliament**

The constitutional doctrine of ministerial responsibility to Parliament is a fiction. It is the Prime Minister and the government majority who primarily decide the fate of ministers in trouble; and the media play a greater role than Parliament as a whole. Legally undefined royal prerogative powers give the Prime Minister and ministers executive freedom unchecked by Parliament. The Prime Minister may even wage war without consulting Parliament. Select committees have improved Parliament's ability to scrutinise, but overall the House of Commons cannot make government accountable for its policies and actions and has a negligible impact on legislation; and the Lords is an unelected cipher which has only a marginal effect on government legislation. Parliament maintains scrutiny of EU legislation and policies, but it is the government alone which has a real say in EU decision-making. The European Parliament has formal power-sharing arrangements with Brussels, but is too remote from the UK and too weak to represent the interests of the British public in the Union.

### **Open government**

The government's Freedom of Information Act 2000 establishes a statutory right of access to official information, but bristles with 31 exemptions to unchallenged access. Some "class" exemptions protect all documents in a given category, like government policy, from disclosure. The government also retains the power to override any decisions by the new Information Commissioner ordering disclosure. Another 300 acts (among them the Official Secrets Act) and orders further prohibit disclosure of information. The degree of secrecy means that the cadre of special advisers and government information officers pursuing the government's "hard-sell" strategy can compromise the political neutrality and accuracy of government information without fear of the full facts being made available.

### **Civilian control of police and state forces**

The armed forces are formally under civilian control and Parliamentary consent must be obtained for their maintenance in peacetime. But the Prime Minister has almost sole command of their disposal and the heads of the three services exert considerable political influence in practice. The intelligence and security services are now statutory bodies and are subject to a nominal system for investigating com-

plaints. They are also nominally accountable to a committee appointed by the Prime Minister, but its powers of inquiry are limited and its reports are censored. The police have traditionally been locally accountable, but over the past quarter century Home Secretaries have increased central power over the police. The Police Reform Act 2002 further consolidates this power. However, police complaints are being taken more seriously, even though excessive police secrecy continues, and police conduct is of a higher standard than in similar European nations.

### **Combatting corruption**

British politics are relatively uncorrupt by the standards of the larger European nations. Evidence of corruption in the Commons and "sleaze" generally in the Major era led to reforms, codes of conduct for politicians and officials at all levels, and new enforcement mechanisms. But MPs and even ministers obstructed the inquiries of the Commissioner for Parliamentary Standards in a series of high-profile cases and the government connived in her effective dismissal. Public confidence in self-regulation in Parliament, never high, fell further and concerns also rose over the degree of business influence over public policy in the wake of publicity for major donations to the Labour party. Labour is now seen as a sleazy party along with the Conservatives.

### **Honest and responsive media**

The British media are broadly representative of a diversity of interests and opinions, but ownership of broadcasting and the press is being concentrated in fewer corporate hands. The forthcoming Broadcasting Bill will accelerate the corporate hegemony of the broadcast media, though the BBC survives as a well-funded public service. Regulation is becoming more "light-touch". Television maintains high standards in the reporting of politics to an increasingly uninterested public. So do several broad-sheet newspapers, though political biases can distort their coverage. The tabloid press is however often intensely partisan, sensational and trivial and can exploit majority suspicions of asylum-seekers and other societal divisions.

### **Active civil society**

People are less and less active in formal politics, but Britain has a strong tradition of civic and voluntary activism in all walks of life through charities, voluntary organisations, pressure groups, trade unions, protest groups, and so on. Voluntary organisations are mainly independent of the state, but their independence risks being compromised by the £5 billion they receive annually from the state (a third of their income) and their growing service role. Trade unions account for 6.8 million workers and 691 trade associations represent over 670,000 companies. Central and local government rely on over 500,000 members of the public to serve on juries, quangos, local councils,

school governing bodies, etc, and to act as JPs and special constables. But discrimination against women and ethnic minorities persists.

### **Women in public life**

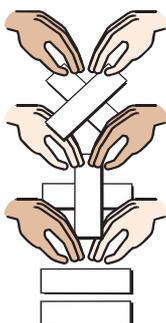
After the partial breakthrough at the 1997 election, women's representation in the House of Commons (at 17.9 per cent of all MPs in 2001) far exceeds previous levels in the UK, but compares badly with other EU nations (other than France and Italy), especially the Nordic nations (e.g., Sweden's figure is 42.7 per cent). We estimate that it would take until 2033 to achieve parity on the Labour benches alone. Women also make up only 16.5 per cent of peers in the Lords. Such figures reflect gender imbalances throughout political, public and business life in the UK. The position for ethnic minorities is even worse, and for women from ethnic minorities worst of all. The Audit contains full figures for most areas of public life.

### **Responsive government**

Four out of five people in the UK believe they have no influence over government policy between elections, even though the government reformed official procedures for public consultation on policy and legislation extensively in November 2000. A new code of conduct set new standards for all government departments. Doubts remain about the willingness of government to consult on controversial issues, such as PFI schemes, at national or local level. The government has made good use of public inquiries, like those into the Bloody Sunday killings, the CJD epidemic, the murder of Stephen Lawrence and child deaths from heart surgery in Bristol, to demonstrate its willingness to give concerned members of the public a voice on matters of particular concern.

### **Devolution**

The UK is a unitary state. Prior to 1997, no nation nor region within the UK had any degree of elected self-rule. The government has since devolved power to a Scottish Parliament and Welsh and NI assemblies. However there is a hole in the heart of devolution – namely, England. Thus 80 per cent of the UK is still directly ruled from the centre. The current measures of "home rule" are unequal and reserve much power at the centre; and the Treasury still rules so far as financial resourcing, tax and benefits policies are concerned (though Scotland can marginally vary the rate of income tax). But they have introduced more representative and responsive government closer to the people in Scotland and Wales; are seeking do so in Northern Ireland as part of the government's brave attempts to achieve a peace settlement; and the dynamism of reform engendered is also affecting England. But the tentative proposals for elected regional assemblies in England aim merely to create weak and confined bodies (as the Greater London Assembly is) if they ever exist. The government is cautiously releasing local authorities from



tight central controls, but local government in the UK does not meet the standards of the European Charter on Local Self-Government. Overall, Britain compares very badly on both regional and local government with similar European states.

**Democracy in foreign policy**

The 1997 government's self-proclaimed ethical foreign policy, emphasising human rights, control of arms sales, environmental protection, etc, has had a mixed record. But if the UK push on debt reliefs for impoverished nations and Clare Short's labours on development and democracy abroad are taken into account, then

the UK is making significant progress. Yet the UK aid budget, though raised, will still amount to only 0.4 per cent of GDP by 2005 (the UN target figure is 0.7 per cent). Britain has a disproportionately high place in international institutions and, with the EU, continues to disadvantage developing states in world markets through continued protectionism and subsidies, nullifying the aid effort. The continuing policy of subordination to the USA in the invasion of Iraq and foreign and defence policy in general, is of concern, particularly in view of the unilateralist and hawkish policies now adopted by President Bush.

**A DEMOCRATIC REFORM AGENDA**

Most of the reforms necessary to create a modern democracy in the UK are implicit in the summaries that precede this section. We fear that short of revolution or major crisis, such reforms will be a long time coming, if ever. The European Union, or the more dynamic examples of home rule in Scotland and Wales, are otherwise most likely to stimulate further reforms. We have considered the arguments in favour of recognised the growing de facto transition from cabinet government to a primitive presidentialism and introducing major structural reforms to subject our quasi-president to rules of conduct and to make him or her accountable. But if a more gradual reform process is unlikely to succeed, then a constitutional revolution is even more unlikely. In any event, we believe that presidential systems are inherently less democratic than Prime Ministerial or cabinet systems, being less collective in approach.

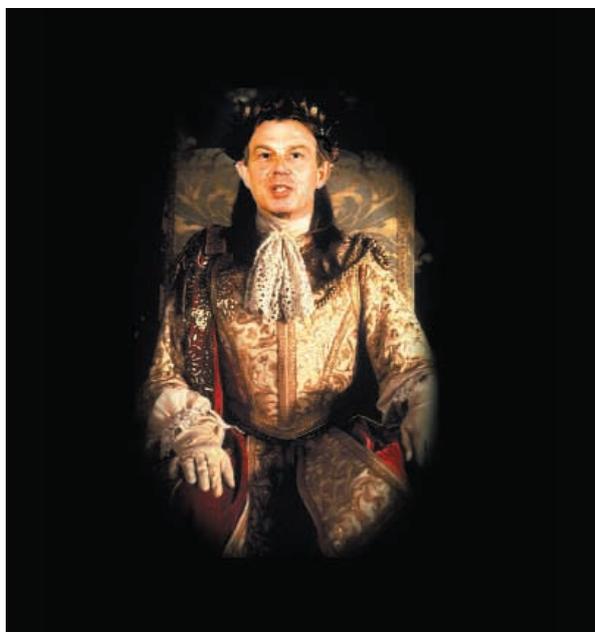
Be that as it may, we round off this leaflet with modest proposals for reform:

**Modernising government in the UK**

- Consult the public widely on drafting a written constitution for the UK
- Introduce proportional representation for elections

to the House of Commons

- Create a second chamber also elected by proportional representation
- Pass a Civil Service Act with clear legal rules for executive conduct
- Replace royal prerogative powers with clearly defined statutory powers for the Prime Minister and ministers
- Pass a fully comprehensive equality law
- Abolish the Lord Chancellor's judicial authority
- Set up a Human Rights Commission
- Establish economic and social rights in British law
- Examine in public the case for and against state funding for political parties
- Make policing locally accountable
- Institute independent regulation of standards in both Houses of Parliament
- Extend affirmative action in the political parties and public sector
- Remedy the bias towards business interests in public participation
- Make local government more independent on the European model
- Raise aid spending to the UN target and abolish protection and subsidy regimes.



The Human Rights Centre owes thanks to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust which first conceived of the idea of a democratic audit in the UK and chose the Centre as its home. The Trust has sponsored the Audit for the past ten years as a proactive Trust project, shared with the Centre, and is now handing it over to the University of Essex as an ongoing project. The Centre is also grateful to the university authorities at Essex for their unwavering support.

This leaflet concerns *Democracy under Blair* (Politico's £12.99) only. Fuller details about Democratic Audit, its researches, publications, etc, will shortly be published on a new website, <http://www.democraticaudit.essex.ac.uk>, to be developed by the Human Rights Centre.

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