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Long to reign over us ?

Paul Richards



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LONG TO REIGN OVER US ?

Contents

	Executive summary	1
	Introduction : The universal hallucination	2
1	Labour's last taboo	4
2	Ways to modernise the Monarchy	10
3	Becoming a democracy	19
	Conclusion : A ceremonial Monarchy in a democratic country	24

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- 1) For the British Monarchy to survive the rising tide of hostility, the Crown must be reinvented as a ceremonial figure-head, with many of the Crown's powers passed to parliament.
- 2) The political role of the Monarch should be completely removed with many functions such as adjudication in event of unclear General Election results, giving assent to bills, and announcing the government's programme at the start of a Parliamentary session, passing to the Speaker of the House. The Prerogative powers should be passed to the relevant government minister, in most cases the Prime Minister, and the power to declare war and ratify treaties should be passed to Parliament.
- 3) Britain should have a written constitution, guaranteeing basic rights and freedoms, to which all public servants and citizens should swear allegiance. There should be a ten-yearly referendum to allow the people a say in whether they want a Monarchy or not, perhaps conducted as part of the national census.
- 4) The Monarchy should be paid for by the people through an annual Royal Levy - a hypothecated charge based on the actual expenditure of the Monarchy. The Royal Household should be re-designated as a Department of the Crown, under parliamentary scrutiny. Revenues from the Crown estate should continue to be paid to the state, and the revenues from the Duchy of Cornwall and Duchy of Lancaster be paid to the state. All other present forms of grant and payment, including the Civil List, Privy Purse, Grants-in-Aid and current expenditure by government departments should be ended.
- 5) The establishment of the Church of England, and the role of Monarch as Supreme Governor must be examined in the light of changing attitudes to religion, the growth of a multi-faith society, and Labour's plans to reform the House of Lords which includes Bishops. The Act of Settlement should be repealed allowing Monarchs religious freedoms and ending institutionalised discrimination against Roman Catholics, and the Clergy (Disqualification) Act should be repealed allowing clergy to stand for parliament.
- 6) The Honours System must be reformed, allowing for independent scrutiny and a clear set of criteria. Part of the Monarch's ceremonial role could remain the conferring of Honours.
- 7) The Commonwealth need not have at its head the British Monarch.
- 8) There should be a new National Anthem for England and a National Anthem for the United Kingdom.

INTRODUCTION: THE UNIVERSAL HALLUCINATION.....

"Kings are not born. They are made by universal hallucination" **George Bernard Shaw.**

There is nothing logical about Monarchy. The British Royal Family stirs emotions which transcend rational analysis, but appeal to mystical, ancient triggers deep within our collective psyche. But the Royal Family exists beyond the realms of fantasy. Its members exist in the real world too: they cost us real money, they have real political views, they possess real powers within our constitution, they profoundly influence the society in which we live.

Thirty-something Britons may like to pretend they were buying vinyl 45's of the Jam's *"In the City"* and wearing punk bondage trousers in 1977, but more likely they were singing *"God Save the Queen"* and eating jelly at a Silver Jubilee street party.

Royalty pervades every facet of British life. Britons live in the Royal County of Berkshire, serve in the Royal Navy, send out letters through the Royal Mail, watch Coronation Street, drink in the Queen's Head, speak the Queen's English, tune into the Queen's Christmas broadcast, watch the Royal Variety Performance, buy products by Royal Appointment, donate money to the Royal National Institute for the Blind, visit the Royal Shakespeare Company, Royal Academy or the Royal Albert Hall.

If we are unlucky we might end up in a Crown Court, represented by a Queen's Counsel, and if the judge (appointed by the Crown) deems it necessary, we could end up detained at Her Majesty's Pleasure.

The powers of the Monarch, which largely lie dormant, include: the power to take over from government ministers including the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister, the power to choose any member of parliament to form a government, the power to refuse royal assent to bills (last used in 1707), the power to dismiss governments, the power to declare a state of emergency, to instruct the Lords Lieutenants to raise a militia, and the power to sell off the battleships of the Royal Navy. Most of these powers are seldom used, of course, but that is not a reason to preserve them.

In Silver Jubilee year 1977 the Central Office of Information was still describing Britain, which had a Labour government at the time, as a *"Monarchical state"* rather than a parliamentary democracy. Sixty years after the universal franchise was established in Britain, the official sources were still defining our country as a Monarchy not a democracy.

After two decades of Conservative government, the country may not be particularly United, but with royalty woven so deep into the fabric of the nation, it is unquestionably a Kingdom. We live in a country under the spell of Shavian universal hallucination.

This Fabian pamphlet is written to stimulate debate about the future of the British Monarchy. It is designed to address some of the most salient criticisms of the institution, and suggest changes that could be implemented by a reforming left-of-centre government. Many of these changes could be introduced gradually, as part of the Monarchy's evolution. This pamphlet is not a polemic against the Royal Family, nor is it a republican propaganda tract.

The Monarchy, if it is to survive, must become the ceremonial figurehead in a democracy where the functions of the state are overseen by elected representatives accountable to Parliament.

1 LABOUR'S LAST TABOO

Constitutional reform runs deep through Labour's thinking. Tony Blair prefaced his John Smith Memorial Lecture on 7th February 1996 with the conviction "*I do not regard changing the way we are governed as an afterthought...I regard it as an essential part of new Britain, of us becoming a young confident country again.*" His vision for a stakeholder democracy includes assemblies for Scotland and Wales established in the first parliament of a Labour government, a referendum on electoral systems for the House of Commons, a Bill of Rights, a Freedom of Information Act, and the removal of the right of hereditary peers to vote in the House of Lords.

No book on socialism by a Labour MP or left-wing think-tank pamphlet would be complete without a call for a new constitutional settlement. Under the strictures of the new financial orthodoxies, proclaiming power to the people through constitutional change allows Labour to let off a little radical steam.

The vast majority of pronouncements, even Tony Blair's comprehensive, hour-long lecture, fail to address the central plank of Britain's unwritten constitution: the Monarchy.

The Monarchy has become Labour's last taboo.

The irony is that while the single currency or minimum wage (about which Labour has policy coming out of its ears) seldom forms the basis for conversations in the pubs and clubs of Britain, the Monarchy has beaten the weather into second place as the nation's favourite subject. It is, as Christopher Hitchens says "*Britain's favourite fetish*". This national obsession is reflected and fuelled by the tabloid press with ever more lurid stories.

Walter Bagehot said of the Monarchy: "*Its mystery is its life. We must not let in daylight upon magic.*" If he was right, then a Monarchy whose innermost sexual secrets, its mental illnesses, its private obsessions and even its vital

statistics are common knowledge must be on the critical list. From Charles's bald patch to Diana's thighs, the Royal Family is subjected to humiliating tabloid dissection day in day out.

We have not merely let daylight in on the magic, we have exposed the magic to the sustained glare of high intensity spotlights over twenty years, and the magic has faded. No other institution - the church, a political party, or business - could have survived the sustained attentions of the world's investigative journalists, snappers and gossip columnists. David Mellor's marital infidelity cost him his job. Gerald Ratner's chance remark sent the share price tumbling. But the Monarchy, with its dirty washing daily exposed to millions via the *Sun*, *Mirror* and the like, somehow stumbles from revelation to crisis and back again.

The uncharted constitutional waters into which Charles and Diana's divorce has steered the Ship of State, the prospect of a divorcee becoming supreme governor of the Church of England, and the undignified behaviour of the younger royals throw the future of the Monarchy, in its present form at least, into serious doubt. The success of popular Presidents such as Mary Robinson, Francois Mitterrand and Nelson Mandela, makes the failures of the British Royal Family all the more stark.

The Labour Party, to be serious about governing Britain, cannot duck the issue any longer.

Ducking this issue is something that the Labour Party has managed particularly well in its ninety-six year history. No serious attempt has been made by any Labour Government to reform the Monarchy, nor has any serious suggestion been made of reform while in opposition.

In 1908 Edward VII banned Keir Hardie from the Royal garden parties. The Parliamentary Labour Party, true to form, mounted a boycott of all royal events until Hardie's name was back on the guest list, and the Palace backed down. The Labour Party took its place at the establishment top-table.

The sole occasion that Labour Conference has ever debated the Monarchy was in 1923. Mr J Vipond of the Stockton and Thornaby Labour Party moved that "*the Royal Family is no longer necessary as part of the British Constitution and the Labour Party is therefore asked to state definitely its view on the matter.*" Mr Thuttle seconding for the Shoreditch trades council, warned of a "*fear complex*" amongst Labour's leaders, and ended with the line "*In this twentieth century the existence of the Monarchy is an anachronism and should be swept away.*" However, Conference loyally agreed with George Lansbury "*What is the use of bothering about that just now?*" and Stockton's resolution was lost by 3,694,000 votes to 386,000, and that was that. Never was an issue so artfully ducked.

In 96 years of party conferences, totalling an equivalent of two years' solid debates, Labour has spent approximately a quarter of an hour discussing the Monarchy.

Labour's Prime Ministers have all been staunch monarchists. Clement Attlee believed "*a conscientious constitutional Monarch is a strong element of stability and continuity in our constitution.*" Harold Wilson's biographer claims that after his weekly audience with the Queen, Wilson "*would come back in euphoric mood and sometimes seemed noticeably to have changed his opinion as a result of what had been said.*" Wilson carried a photograph of himself with the Queen at Balmoral in his wallet until it virtually fell to bits. The only attempts to challenge Royal influence during his premierships was the failed attempt by Postmaster General Tony Benn to take the Queen's head off the postage stamps.

Michael Stewart MP, writing in *Fabian Journal* in 1952, offered a series of reforms for the Monarchy at the dawn of the new Elizabethan age. His suggestions included: that the Queen should use her social influence to discourage racial discrimination; there should be more reporting of the Royal Family's activities, helped by "*an occasional speech or broadcast by the Queen telling her people what she has been doing the previous week.*"

It is a great irony that he should call for more Royal news stories when today most of us long for less. Despite Stewart's suggestion that the Queen should lead the fight against racial prejudice by example, she has not appointed a single black or Asian person to her 400-strong Household for 39 years.

In 1971-2, a select committee was established to tackle the problem that the Civil List could no longer keep up with inflation. One of the members, Douglas Houghton, the Labour member for Sowerby, devised a plan to establish parliamentary scrutiny over the Civil List. The Houghton Plan became official Labour policy, but was fiercely opposed by the Tories and remains unimplemented.

Today, Labour's leaders seem locked into the same "*fear complex*" that the delegate from Stockton warned party conference about in 1923. Hardie's heirs are mesmerised into silence by the royal *son et lumiere*.

In January 1993 Jack Straw spoke to the Blackburn Labour Party about the need for a "*tighter and more limited constitutional Monarchy on the Dutch or Scandinavian model.*" He concluded: "*The current royal system, with its large number of participants and its emphasis on show-business, has little serious future. After all there is little mystery about a soap opera.*"

In March 1996 Shadow Welsh Secretary Ron Davis lit the republican bonfire with a chance remark about the Prince Charles (which was quite mild for South Wales), for which he was made to apologise, and Gordon Prentice MP

waved a small sparkler with an Early Day Motion criticising the costs of the Royal Train (which costs £136.30p per mile travelled and since privatisation is owned by US company Wisconsin Central).

Could Britain become a Republic?

"Oh, that the free would stamp the impious name of KING into the dust!"

Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Ode to Liberty* in *Popular Songs*, 1832.

Republicanism has little resonance in current Labour policy. The Labour Party is not committed to a republican solution to Britain's constitutional ills. After all, if the Party wasn't republican in 1924, when the issue was on the conference agenda just six years after the Russian revolution, today's Labour Party seems unlikely to back a move to a republic.

But opinion polling suggests that anti-royal feeling is on the increase and republicanism grows as a serious political option as the Royals grow ever more unpopular.

Republicanism has been a force throughout British history, and between 1649 and May 1660 Britain was a republic. When the state coach bears Queen Elizabeth to the House of Lords to deliver the Queen's Speech each November, she passes a statue of the man responsible for chopping her ancestor Charles the First's royal head off: Oliver Cromwell.

Republicanism ran as a strong current through the ideas of the Levellers and the Diggers and Tom Paine's republicanism inspired the revolution in America against the madness of George III. Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill were republicans.

Perhaps the most notorious parliamentary republican in our times is former Labour MP Willie Hamilton, whose crusade against the Monarchy and all its works dominated his Commons career.

Other nations' births as republics have involved civil war, firing squads and sticking heads on pikestaffs.

If we assume that a revolution in Great Britain is somewhat unlikely, then the only other option is the parliamentary approach favoured by latter-day Roundheads such as Tony Benn MP.

Modern republicans argue that a Monarchy is inherently anti-democratic and blights the national character with deference, hierarchy and ancestor-worship. Britain can never become a truly modern state while the trappings of feudalism remain, so the argument runs.

Other countries' experience of Monarchy tends to disprove this aspect of the republican thesis. Sweden has long been hailed as an example of social-democracy in action, with high standards of welfare, egalitarian governance, and social tolerance. The Swedish social democrats have governed for most of this

century without the desire to do away with the Swedish Royal Family which has been on the throne since 1810.

The Japanese Monarchy has been no barrier to Japan's industrial supremacy. Britain's social and economic failings, great though they are, cannot be explained away purely by the existence of a Windsor on the throne.

The view of modern republicans like Tom Nairn or Stephen Haseler that we are hobbled economically because Britain has a Royal Family is over-simplistic. British Leyland did not fail because of the British Royal Family.

Worse still, such republican scapegoating of the royals serves as an excuse for failing to address the real reasons for Britain's ills.

The democratic route to a republic is difficult, but not impossible. The impetus in other countries has tended to be revolution (Russia, France), independence from a colonial power (USA, Ireland), or occupation (Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria). A Republic of Great Britain Bill would dominate the lifetime of a parliament to the detriment of all other economic and social affairs, and if passed would change virtually every facet of British life beyond recognition. From postage stamps to the names of warships, every area of political, social, economic, financial, religious and civil life would be transformed, and potentially unleash political forces beyond our control or comprehension.

Peter Hain MP, a committed republican, says "*Given much more pressing priorities, it would be hard to justify an incoming Labour government immediately getting bogged down in abolishing the Monarchy.*"

Even George Orwell, writing during the Blitz on London, with the 1936 abdication crisis fresh in his mind, suggested that the English revolution would "*not be doctrinaire, nor even logical. It will abolish the House of Lords, but quite probably will not abolish the Monarchy.*"

Republicanism is not confined to the Left. The logical end point of the free market, libertarian Thatcherite agenda is an end to hereditary institutions. If you roll back the state, the Crown goes with it. Roderick Moore makes the libertarian case for a republic writing for the Libertarian Alliance: "*...the monarchical system has become a Frankenstein's monster. It is time to change the system.*" Antoine Clarke of the Libertarian Alliance says that "*the only reason we in Britain still have a Monarchy is inertia; it would be a tiresome chore to dispose of it.*"

It is not inconceivable that Britain could become a Republic. Anyone receiving an old age pension today has seen huge shifts in Britain's political, economic and sociological make-up. From Imperial power to member of the European Union, via two world wars, a sexual and social revolution, the establishment of a welfare state, significant immigration from the former colonies, and the col-

lapse of heavy industry, Britain has transformed beyond what our Edwardian forbearers could have imagined. The change to a republic over a comparable timescale would be no greater than the changes which we have already undergone as a nation. And yet in the immediate future, many still believe the Monarchy will survive. For example, as Peter Hennessy predicts: "*Whatever else Britain's constitutional landscape may look like around the year 2020, there will be a Windsor on the throne and his name will be Charles III or William V.*"

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WAYS TO MODERNISE THE MONARCHY

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“Without a set of written constitutional obligations or democratic legitimacy, the Royal Family has to rely on its unimpeachable behaviour for its continuing legitimacy - and this is beyond the capacity of any human family to guarantee...it seems unlikely that the Monarchy can survive unchanged into the next century.”

The State We're In, Will Hutton 1995

The choice is not however between the unpalatable status quo for the Royals, with its seemingly inexorable haemorrhaging of public support, and a full-blown Republic with President Thatcher at its head. As you would expect from a Fabian author I believe there is a middle way.

Conservatives who attack suggestions for modernising the Monarchy not only fail to understand how the Royal Family has survived a thousand years, but also risk provoking greater hostility and even outright opposition against the Monarchy. All institutions, be they the church, the civil service, or even the Labour Party, must evolve and re-invent themselves in order to remain relevant. Queen Elizabeth, with her willingness to pay some income tax and open part of Buckingham Palace to the public, seems to understand the importance of evolutionary change.

The Victorian concept of a “constitutional Monarchy” was invented to justify hereditary rule alongside the extension of the democratic franchise and establishment of the party system. Disraeli showed none of the reluctance to reform the Monarchy of his Conservative heirs. He helped to re-invent Queen Victoria as Empress of India after her fifteen year recluse to stem a rise in republicanism.

During the social upheavals of 1911, David Lloyd George organised for the Prince of Wales, the future Edward VIII, his Investiture as Prince of Wales.

In 1917 at the height of the war with Germany led by their cousin Kaiser Wilhelm the Royals chose the name Windsor (at the suggestion of Lord Stamfordham, King George V's Principal Private Secretary) to replace the family name Hanover-Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to mask their Germanic roots. (In

1947 Prince Philip followed the same course by swapping his name Schleswig-Holstein Sonderburg-Glucksberg for Mountbatten.)

The idea of a "Royal Family"- a family Monarchy - was invented under George VI to re-establish the Monarchy after the Abdication crisis. The breakdown in the marriages of three out of four of the present Queen's children and the fact that the heir to the throne is a self-confessed adulterer means that the "family Monarchy" label has outgrown its usefulness. It is time for another Royal re-invention.

Monarchy in a democracy

"In the Crown's own long-term interests, the fog over its political role needs to be lifted. This is an overdue subject for political debate." Peter Riddell, *The Times*, 7 September 1994

The prerogative powers of the Crown are a hangover from feudalism, the remnants of the absolutist monarchies of the past, and are an affront to the British democratic system. The rights we enjoy in Britain are not positive rights of liberty forged in the founding of our nation, such as those of France or the United States, but rights granted, usually grudgingly, in relation to the powers of the Monarch.

Each Act of Parliament establishing rights is characterised by the restricting of the prerogative powers of the Crown. The landmark Acts are the Bill of Rights (1688), the Act of Settlement (1700-01), the Succession to the Crown Act (1707) and the Parliament Acts of 1911 and 1949. Despite these Acts, the Monarch retains the power to declare war, sign treaties, choose the Prime Minister, and dissolve parliament, to confer honours and to appoint judges. In practice these powers are largely passed to ministers who can act as dictators in a range of areas without reference to parliament.

The government used the Royal Prerogative to allow the United States to bomb Libya from bases in Britain in 1986, and to send the British Army to war under a foreign command in the Gulf war. The government banned trade unions at GCHQ using Prerogative Powers. The Prime Minister's right to choose the date of the next general election derives from the Prerogative. Even Parliament itself according to Erskine May *"results from the exercise of the Royal Prerogative."*

We now know that Attlee passed over Hugh Dalton as Foreign Secretary in favour of Ernest Bevin on the strong advice of King George V. Prime Ministers can ignore Royal Advice of course. When Queen Elizabeth offered Harold Wilson the opportunity to change his mind over a controversial choice of Honours, he ignored her. James Callaghan records that the Queen directly

intervened in the Rhodesia question in 1974.

As recently as 1975, the Australian Labor Prime Minister Gough Whitlam was dismissed by the Governor-General of Australia Sir John Kerr, using prerogative powers.

The British may like to believe that the Monarchy is above politics, but such recent evidence as exists suggests that the very opposite is true. Peter Hennessy lists six occasions since the war that exercise of the reserve powers of the Monarch has arisen when there has not been a clear majority in the House of Commons, including 1964 and 1974.

Breaking the Deadlock

The Deadlock File is a document written in the small hours of Friday 16 October 1964 by Sir Derek Mitchell, Home's Principal Private Secretary, when the outcome of the 1964 general election looked as though Wilson would fail to reach a majority. The memo, as well as covering the practical questions of how to get Harold Wilson to the Palace, and where he and Mrs Wilson would have their dinner that evening, outlines the options for the Queen in choosing her Prime Minister in the event of an unclear election result. Peter Hennessy holds up the 1964 Deadlock File as the ultimate proof of the "back of an envelope" approach of the guardians of governance, and strongly advocates a clear set of rules to be established, covering all contingencies thrown up by the vagaries of the electoral system. *"These particular constitutional power-lines really should be brought to the surface for all to see and inspect. Ours, after all, is the era of transparency and regulation."*

The point is not however that these constitutional power-lines should be brought to the surface: they should be severed. The will of the people must be supreme. Whichever party commands a majority must govern. Whoever that party chooses to be Prime Minister must enter Number Ten. If coalitions form, then their deliberations will result in whatever arrangements they see fit on the basis of a clear set of rules. It should be the role of the Speaker of the House of Commons, who acts as parliamentary referee on all other matters, to adjudicate when the electorate do not deliver a clear mandate.

The Monarch's power to adjudicate in the event of unclear general election results on the basis of unwritten rules, and advice scribbled on the back of an envelope by civil servants at three in the morning, must be consigned to the history books.

A new role for the Speaker

As well as acting as adjudicator in unclear general election results, the Speaker

of the House of Commons could take some of the other functions currently exercised by the Monarch in relation to the legislature, for example giving Assent to Bills. Instead of the ruler granting approval to his or her ministers, this would become more of a final approval that a bill had been through the proper parliamentary channels. The Speaker is not only elected to parliament, but also elected by MPs themselves, and has usually been a popular public figure, representing the best traditions of democratic debate. The State Opening of Parliament should no longer be a royal occasion, but a grand parliamentary affair. If we wished, it would lose none of the pageantry and pomp, but it would be a symbol of democratic governance, instead of the Royal pageant, described thus by Richard Crossman in 1967: *"It is more what a real Ruritania would look like - far more comic, more untidy, more homely, less grand."*

The Speech setting out the government's programme could take place in the Commons, where it will be discussed during the parliament by elected MPs, instead of in the Lords as at present, and should be read by the Speaker of the House of Commons. The speech would then begin *"Our government will..."* instead of the Monarch announcing what his or her government will do. It is not the Crown's government. It is our government, voted for by us. This is not a question of semantics, it goes to the heart of whether Britons are citizens or subjects.

Other Prerogative Powers which must be placed on a clear statutory base as a priority include the declaration of war, the ratification of treaties, the powers of ministers, the running of the Civil Service, and the power to choose a date for a General Election. The power to declare war and to ratify treaties should pass to Parliament, while there should be fixed-term parliaments to take the power of choosing the timing of elections away from the incumbent Prime Minister.

Consulting, advising, warning

Walter Bagehot, who did more than anyone to promulgate the concept of the Crown in Parliament, said the Monarch had the right to be consulted, to advise and to warn "their" governments. The Bagehot formula currently may sound enough even under the modern political spotlight, with the current Monarch on the throne. Today's Queen must have a unique insight into British politics. She has met every Prime Minister since Churchill for a weekly discussion about domestic and overseas affairs, and is in regular contact with her ministers, ambassadors and world leaders.

She is sent Cabinet papers and minutes, and is one of a handful of people who see the weekly report of the Joint Intelligence Committee. When the Queen was famously hoaxed by DJ Pierre Brassard into believing she was talking

with Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien, the conversation revealed Queen Elizabeth to be not only fluent in French, but also possessing an impressive command of international politics.

However, the warnings and advice from her successors might be less helpful. Future Prime Ministers might want to review the frequency of these weekly meetings, and ensure that they form part of advice, warning and consultation with a variety of different sources, playing down the primacy of the Bagehot formula.

An affordable Monarchy

At the heart of modernising the Monarchy must be a total review of its financial arrangements, and a new settlement between the Crown and the people. In the same way that the Prerogative powers of the Crown are the vestiges of pre-democratic absolutist rule, so the way we finance the Monarchy is left over from the age when the State and Monarch were the same.

For the first 600 years of Monarchy in Britain, the financing of the sovereign and the financing of the state were synonymous. The royal finances came under the control of parliament during the reign of Charles I.

The first Civil List Act (1697) granted land revenues and customs and excise duties to the Royal Family, and was intended to cover its personal expenses, the wages and salaries of Ministers and judges, and other elements of civil government. In 1760 the Crown Lands revenues were donated to the state, in exchange for an increase in Civil List funds. In 1994 Prince Charles expressed the view that the Royal Family might be financed by reverting to the pre-1760 arrangement: claiming the Crown Estate revenues, and ending the Civil List. Today's idea of the Civil List - as a parliamentary grant for the Monarchy's use in pursuit of state duties - was established in 1830. Last year the Civil List amounted to £7.9 million.

In addition, Grant-in-aid is given by the Department of National Heritage for the maintenance of royal palaces and in 1995 amounted to £25 million. From 1995 the grant-in-aid accounts will be published annually. The Privy Purse is money given by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster from revenues from the Duchy of Lancaster.

Much of the activity of the Royals is funded directly from government departments. The Royal Flight and *Britannia* for example are funded by the Ministry of Defence. Increasingly expenditure has been transferred from the Civil List to various government departments, so that between 1952 and 1992 the costs met by government departments has increased at eleven times the rate of inflation to £46.2 million.

The final source of income is from the Queen's personal investment portfolio, the magnitude of which is a jealously guarded secret. Vernon Bogdanor estimates that the total cost of the Monarchy from these disparate sources in 1990-91 was £78.1 million, or roughly £1.50 per UK citizen per year, and half of what we spend each year on the Vehicle and Driving Licensing Agency in Swansea.

These arrangements are over-complicated and result not from any logical system but from precedent, accident and anachronism. The Civil List is the remnants of the pre-democratic rule of monarchs. The funding by government departments might be seen as a way of fiddling the figures to keep the bottom line of the Civil List at a level less likely to cause public outcry. For example in 1960-61 the costs of the Royal Train and overseas visits were taken from the Civil List, in 1970 the costs of conferring honours was removed, and in 1974 the costs of the Buckingham Palace press office were taken from the Civil List.

Much of the hostility directed at the institution of the Monarchy is based on misunderstanding and confusion about its finances. Even British Republicans like Stephen Haseler do not base their criticisms on the *amount* we spend on the Monarchy. Presumably in Professor Haseler's Republic of Britain the Head of State would need to be paid for, the Royal Palaces would need to be maintained, and the expenses of state ceremonies such as Republic of Britain Day would need to be met.

The main problem is the secrecy, the complications and the perceptions of waste and over-indulgence. Let the words of an influential political think-tank state the case: "*It would be virtually impossible for an insider to calculate how much is spent on any aspect of the day to day working of the Institution (of the Monarchy) and to discover the source from which the money came. Such a situation would not be tolerated in the fields of Education or Housing...It is dangerous to allow public money to be spent upon it unless the manner in which it is being spent is explained and is capable of being controlled by Parliament. We believe that the national control of public expenditure on the Monarchy is essential.*" said the Conservative Bow Group in March 1968.

The guiding principles for financial reform must be simplicity, transparency and accountability. The first step is to finance the Monarchy via a single source, administered in a way which is open to scrutiny by Parliament, and from which flows tangible benefits. If taxes are, as Roosevelt said, the subscription to a civilised society, then the same principle must apply to living in a Monarchy. If we want a Monarchy, then it must be paid for in a clear and obvious fashion.

A new and more palatable method of funding the Monarchy might be a levy on all taxpayers based on actual expenditure on the Monarchy. This could take the form of an annual hypothecated tax, in the same way we pay for the British

Broadcasting Corporation (the main difference is that a TV licence costs £84.50 per year, but a Royal Levy would be a fraction of that).

If supporters of the Monarchy really believe that the institution enjoys majority support and is relatively cheap to run, then a Royal Levy will be supported. Similar systems work in Sweden, Germany and Norway to finance the state church through the Church Tax (which has an opt-out).

The Royal Levy will also allow cuts in expenditure by the Ministry of Defence and Department of National Heritage as the costs of Monarchy are removed and reallocated, which should prove popular with present Government Ministers. At present expenditure levels, a back of an envelope guesstimate might put the annual charge at less than five pounds for every taxpayer in Britain: or the equivalent of a packet of cigarettes and a National Lottery Instant in return for a fully-functioning Monarchy.

Another source of income would be the revenues raised by increased opening of palaces and sales of souvenirs. The principle of allowing the public's willingness to pay to glimpse inside the world of Royalty to help meet the expenses of the Monarchy was established in 1962 when the Queen's Picture Gallery was opened to the public. The entrance fees go towards the upkeep of the pictures.

The opening of Buckingham Palace has proved to be a grand success, with 413,000 visitors over just 56 days in 1995 spending £3 million on the entrance fees and souvenirs. As with all change, there were those who saw opening Buckingham Palace as the start of a slippery slope into republicanism. But those siren voices have been proved wrong.

Opening Buckingham Palace is part of a five - year programme to raise money to pay for the restoration of Windsor Castle. At the end of the five years, Buckingham Palace must stay open to the public, and for more days of the year than at present. The £8.50 entrance fee should be brought down to a more affordable level.

Taxation

The Monarch must pay tax. One argument for the Queen not paying tax on the Civil List, or on the type of grant I am advocating, is that the state would simply be giving with one hand while taking with the other. But this argument fails to address the point of calls for Royals to pay tax.

The issue is not the money, it is the point that every citizen should contribute to society, including those at the very top. Civil Servants, MPs, and army officers are all paid by the state, and there is no suggestion that they should be excluded from the tax system. The Monarchy must not be seen to be above

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paying taxes the same as the rest of us. Parliament should ask the Queen to continue to pay tax, as Queen Victoria did, on her private income, and ensure that such taxation is seen as binding on her successors, not a matter of individual choice.

An Accountable Monarchy

I propose to turn the Royal Household into a Department of the Crown, answerable to Parliament, with Crown Commissioners including the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, whose responsibilities would include the Royal Levy. Members of the Royal Household would become Civil Servants instead of servants and courtiers, and be protected by employment legislation and have the right to representation.

The Monarch would retain a small private secretariat and personal staff. The entire expenditure of the Monarchy would be brought under annual parliamentary scrutiny, as those parts covered by the Ministry of Defence and the Department of National Heritage are at present.

A ten-yearly referendum on the Monarchy

A clearly defined financial settlement, with Royal rights balanced with duties, will give the Monarchy greater legitimacy. But there will still be great debate over the future of the institution, and detractors will seek to claim that the Monarchy is no longer wanted in Britain.

The opinion polls are the hardest evidence we have of majority support for the Monarchy, but polls vary greatly dependent on samples, timing, and methodology. A recent *Sun* readers telephone poll showed an anti-Monarchy majority. In the democratic age, there is one way of divining the national mood: through the ballot box. I propose a national referendum every ten years with the simple yes or no question "*Should Britain have a Monarchy?*", perhaps conducted as part of the national census.

The referendum would provide continuing democratic legitimacy to a pre-democratic institution. It would have no legal force: a "no" vote would not instantly abolish the Monarchy. If, as seems likely, the majority continue to support the Monarchy, then the institution can rest on the knowledge it has national support. If more people answer "no" than "yes", then the politicians of the day must debate the issue. A ten-yearly referendum would remove the uncertainty and speculation surrounding support for the Monarchy. The referendum could take place as part of the ten-yearly national census.

The central plank of an accountable Monarchy is a written constitution for Britain, enshrining the rights and duties of the Royal Family, and the place of

the Monarchy in relation to the Courts, Armed Services, Parliament, Civil Service and the people of Britain. A written constitution should be the sole foundation for the exercise of executive, legislative and judicial power in the United Kingdom. In Sweden, the Monarchy's prerogative powers were completely removed in 1974. Swedish Monarchs swear allegiance to the constitution, article one of which states: "*All public power in Sweden emanates from the people.*" Britain would do well to learn from this approach.

BECOMING A DEMOCRACY

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The Monarch as Supreme Governor of the Church of England

"I've always felt that the Catholic subjects of the sovereign are equally as important as the Anglican ones, as the Protestant ones. Likewise I think that the Islamic subjects or the Hindu subjects or the Zoroastrian subjects of the sovereign are of equal and vital importance" **Prince Charles.**

"Kings are Gods" **James I**

It is impossible to take a serious look at the position of the Monarchy without a discussion about the role of Monarch as Supreme Governor of the English state church. I use the word English deliberately because the Monarch is not governor of the Welsh or Scottish churches.

In Ireland the church was disestablished in 1869. (Karl Marx predicted that following disestablishment in Ireland *"the established church will collapse in England"*. As with most of Marx's predictions, we are still waiting). In Wales, the church was disestablished in 1920.

The role of Monarch as supreme Governor of the Church of England is enshrined in the Act of Settlement 1707, an Act which is reaffirmed in the Coronation Oath. This too is the Act which institutionalises in law discrimination against Britain's 2 million Roman Catholics.

The Monarch appoints all bishops and deans of the Church of England, who in turn swear allegiance to the Monarch, as do deacons and parish priests.

Disestablishment would mean that the Monarch would enjoy the same religious freedoms as the rest of us, the freedom to follow whichever religion they chose and to marry someone of any religious faith.

With repeal of the Act of Settlement would come the end of religious discrimination which has little place in a multi-faith Britain. Such a reform would also open the door to repeal of the Clergy Disqualification Act (1910), which prevents Church of England clergy from standing for election to the House of

Commons. If we are to have adulterers, arms-dealers, and various forms of scoundrel in the House of Commons, the presence of the occasional dog-collar would not be a bad thing. The whole issue of disestablishment may be brought to a head if reform of the House of Lords becomes a reality. The Lords contains the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and 24 Bishops to ensure the Church of England has a role in Parliament.

Three years after Queen Elizabeth II was crowned, a poll showed that 35 per cent of the population believed that the sovereign had been chosen by God. By the time her heir is crowned only one in sixty will regularly worship in a Church of England church.

Prince Charles has rejected disestablishment, but has suggested a redefining of the Monarch as Defender of Faith, rather than the title Defender of *the* Faith bestowed on Henry VIII by the Pope and which appears, in abbreviated Latin, on our coins. Ironically the faith referred to in this title is the Roman Catholic faith, which as any school boy or girl can tell you, Henry VIII made a poor job of defending.

There is a compelling logic for disestablishing the Church of England, but no great demand for it even within the church. When Labour's proposals for reform of the House of Lords are enacted, the role of the Bishops will undoubtedly be debated, which in turn might cause greater scrutiny of the link between Church and State. A secular Monarchy might be more in tune with a population which includes followers of all religions, and none.

Putting Some Honour back in the System

One very public manifestation of the Monarchy's power of patronage is the Honour system. The Monarchy is styled as the Fount of Honour, and every six months around 1000 people are honoured by the Queen on the recommendations of Downing Street. The recommendations are a mixture of the highly political, and often controversial, with the honouring of the brave, and the long-serving.

The twice yearly ceremony is according to Antony Jay "*very like an extremely high-class version of a school prize giving.*"

There should be no philosophical problem for socialists with the conferring of honours. Businesses and organisations recognise the importance of tangible recognition of service and loyalty for their staff, and of incentives beyond the purely pecuniary. The staff in McDonalds might aspire to becoming Crew Member of the Month, and senior Civil Servants get knighthoods. Even the Labour Party has long-service awards.

The problem is the musty smell of Empire which pervades the Honour Sys-

tem, the odour of Europeans-Only Clubs, of soldiers drilling on the parade grounds of Lucknow and Cawnpore, of *Pax Britannica*, which turns the stomach of democrats in a multi-racial, European parliamentary democracy.

There is something faintly ridiculous in conferring the Order of the British Empire when there isn't one. The Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire and the Imperial Order of the Crown of India were abolished, rightly, in 1947. The restyling of the OBE is long-overdue.

There is too the question of criteria for awards. The Conservative Government's use of knighthoods and gongs to reward captains of industry, who coincidentally have made large donations to the party coffers, is well documented. John Major's attempt to make the Honour System classless was characteristically ineffectual. In 1993 he ended the class distinction between the British Empire Medal, awarded to working class people, and the Member of the British Empire awarded to those higher up the social ladder. But John Major left in place the rest of what Jeremy Paxman calls "*the pantomime*".

Awarding a medal to the conductor on the Number 12 bus does little to offset the awarding of Honours to civil servants for doing no more than the job we pay them to do. Why should Foreign Office mandarins, whose sole eligibility is long-service, become members of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George, with its three classes CMG, KCMG and GCMG.*

In the same list of Honours were a fireman who had fought the Bradford football stadium fire, who was awarded the British Empire Medal, and Gordon Reece, the ad man who had helped Margaret Thatcher, who was knighted. Clearly something is wrong with such a system.

A new system of Honours is needed which is fairer, granted for genuinely outstanding service or bravery, and which reflects the priorities of a modern society. The British Medal, the Community Service Medal, the Civil Service Award, or similar, can replace the present establishment orgy of self-congratulation.

The emphasis should be on outstanding community service, charity work, or bravery. The new Honours system should be the manifestation of a society which values the actions of a police officer foiling an armed robbery or someone with twenty years' voluntary service with Guide Dogs for the Blind more highly than a pen-pusher in Whitehall or a high-level donor to the Tory Party.

The conferring of Honours should remain part of the ceremonial function of Monarchy, but their allocation must be taken away from the gift of politicians and given to an independent body on the basis of strict criteria. Such a committee should be subject to parliamentary ratification.

Then perhaps the Honours system will live up to the name.

*Droll civil servants will tell you that the initials stand for Call Me God, Kindly Call Me God, and God Calls Me God!

A Modern Commonwealth

"It is possible that the Queen is the only person in the British Isles who is interested in the British Commonwealth. Most of her subjects have some difficulty in remembering exactly what it is."

AN Wilson *The Rise and Fall of the House of Windsor*

Paul Keating's defeat in the Australian general election was not the outright rejection of republicanism that some have suggested. The republican issue will not go away.

The Commonwealth served to soften the blow to the national self-esteem of the retreat from Empire. Commonwealth nations such as Australia, Belize, Canada, and Papua New Guinea have little in common except that Elizabeth II is their Head of State, and their shared colonial past.

As well as the 15 states with the Queen as their Head, there are 28 republics within the Commonwealth, including the most recent addition in 1994: South Africa.

It seems likely that referenda in Australia, New Zealand and Canada will sooner or later end the British Monarch's role as Head of State, and the powers of unelected Governor Generals. This will not end the strong relationship between Commonwealth countries and Britain, it will merely place it on a more equal, post-Imperialist footing.

There is no reason for the British Monarch to be Head of the Commonwealth in perpetuity. The post of Head of the Commonwealth should be opened up to Heads of State from each of the Commonwealth countries, perhaps on a yearly or six-monthly rotation, in the same fashion as the Presidency of the European Union.

A New National Anthem

Britain's national anthem is something of an embarrassment in a modern age, not least because of the dirge-like tune which stirs none of the emotion of, for example, the *Marseillaise*.

For a start it is an English song, not Welsh or Scottish or Northern Irish. Scotland and Wales have their own anthems "*Flower of Scotland*" and "*Men of Harlech*", both robust celebrations of slaughtering the English.

The National Anthem was first performed as a "patriotic song" in London in 1745, as Bonnie Prince Charlie landed on the west coast of Scotland and marched to defeat George II's army at Prestonpans. The song was anti-Jacobite, and fiercely Protestant.

Our national anthem is not an exaltation of nationhood or an expression of pride in our country (it doesn't mention Britain, or even England once). It was

a song which focused on bashing the Jacobite challenge to the House of Hanover: "Scatter his enemies, and make them fall, confound their politics, frustrate their knavish tricks". The verse about crushing rebellious Scots has tactfully fallen into disuse. *

It is time for a new *English* national anthem to be adopted. This need not be a new song. Patriotic hymns such as "I vow to thee my country" or "Jerusalem" would fit the bill admirably.

The United Kingdom should be a partnership of nations, with distinct cultural and historical differences as well as shared interests. *England* is not a synonym for *Britain*. The national millennium celebrations in four years' time might include the unveiling of a new British national anthem, celebrating the United Kingdom as a whole, not just one part of it, with words by the Poet Laureate and music by one of our composers. Perhaps Andrew Lloyd Webber might be persuaded.

* When Marshall Wade led the English Army northwards to meet the Jacobite invaders (who made it as far as Derby) a new verse was added to the "National" Anthem: "Lord, grant that Marshall Wade, May by thy mighty aid, Victory bring. May he sedition hush and like a torrent rush, rebellious Scots to crush, God save the King"

CONCLUSION: A CEREMONIAL MONARCHY IN A DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY

"The answer to this question of the Monarchy is very simple - if people don't like it they can change it."

Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

A sustained look at the Monarchy in the Internet Age produces the same findings as the recent scrutiny of the Turin Shroud: it is revealed as a fake. Socialists would have no desire to invent a Monarchy in Britain if none existed. However the Fabian approach is to look at the world as we find it, not as we wish it to be, and draw conclusions based on fact and evidence.

The British Monarchy maintains a remarkable resilience to criticism, and popularity with the public despite all of the problems it faces. The role of the Royals as patrons of sport, the arts and charities gives great support to positive aspects of civil society. (Sometimes the appearance of a royal on a letterhead does not correspond to a genuine interest. The Duke of Edinburgh on a visit to the Royal National Institute for Deaf People is reputed to have asked to see the Braille library.) The ethos of public service and One Nation can be symbolised by the Monarchy. The Windsors and their heirs should be Britain's First Family, instead of the current uneasy synthesis of sovereignty and soap opera.

The trappings of unearned wealth, unelected power and unjustifiable decadence do the Royal Family no credit, risk a further fall in public esteem, and must be ended. They do little to enhance Britain's international standing as anything more than a source of gossip for *Hello!* or a over-sized theme park.

Blueprints imposed from abroad are not the solution: we shall have a British answer to a British problem. This pamphlet does not advocate a "Scandinavian Style Monarchy". It advocates a British style Monarchy, but based on the Britain we now live in, not the Britain of our grandparents. As post-industrial, post-imperial Britain struggles to find a place in the new world order, as part of the European Union, with pressures for devolution from its constituent nations and regions, then it may be that the comforting symbols of Monarchy find new resonance.

The suggestions in this pamphlet may seem radical to some, not radical enough to others. But the question is not whether the Monarchy should change - change is inevitable - but whether change is managed, planned and has support.

As the Queen said in November 1992 in her famous "annus horribilis" speech

in the City of London: "No institution - City, Monarchy, whatever, should expect to be free from the scrutiny of those who give it their loyalty and support - not to mention those who don't. This sort of questioning can also act and it should do as an effective engine for change."

We must begin to discuss modernising the Monarchy. We must break the taboo. Polling already suggests only a third of the public believe the Monarchy has a long-term future. Among those aged 18-24 a quarter think Britain would be better off without a Monarchy, and only a fifth say it would be worse off.

If discussions on the Monarchy are confined to *Hello!* magazine, we may be saying goodbye to the House of Windsor.

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£5 LONG TO REIGN OVER US ?

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New Labour is in favour of reforming the House of Commons and the House of Lords, introducing Scottish and Welsh Parliaments, a Bill of Rights and a Freedom of Information Act. Yet it has so far remained silent on the future of the institution at the heart of Britain's constitution, the Monarchy.

In this exciting new pamphlet, Paul Richards, a loyal monarchist, argues that if the Monarchy is to continue it must be reformed. He argues for :

- A hypothecated Royal tax to pay for the activities of the Royal Family;
- a referendum on the future of the Monarchy;
- a new, less royalist, national anthem;
- an end to the Queen as head of the Commonwealth;
- scrapping of the Queen's Speech and the handing over of most prerogative powers to the Speaker of the House of Commons;
- a genuinely classless Honours system.

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