**1.1 Курс лекций по дисциплине «Страноведение Великобритании»**

1. BRITAIN: THE MAKING OF THE NATION

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**1.1 The Iberians and Celtic tribes.**

Britain has not always been an island. It became one only after the end of the last ice age. The temperature rose and the ice cap melted, flooding the lower-lying land that is now under the North Sea and the English Channel.

The Ice Age was not just one long equally cold period. There were warmer times when the ice cap retreated, and colder periods when the ice cap reached as far south as the River Thames. Our first evidence of human life is a few stone tools, dating from one of the warmer periods, about 250,000 BC. These simple objects show that there were two different kinds of inhabitant. The earlier group made their tools from flakes of flint, similar in kind to stone tools found across the north European plain as far as Russia. The other group made tools from a central core of flint, probably the earliest method of human tool making, which spread from Africa to Europe. Hand axes made in this way have been found widely, as far north as Yorkshire and as far west as Wales.

However, the ice advanced again and Britain became hardly habitable until another milder period, probably around 50,000 BC. During this time a new type of human being seems to have arrived, who was the ancestor of the modem British. These people looked similar to the modem British, but were probably smaller and had a life span of only about thirty years.

Around 10,000 BC, as the Ice Age drew to a close, Britain was peopled by small groups of hunters, gatherers and fishers. Few had settled homes, and they seemed to have followed herds of deer which provided them with food and clothing. By about 5000 BC Britain had finally become an island, and had also become heavily forested. For the wanderer-hunter culture this was a disaster, for the cold-loving deer and other animals on which they lived largely died out.

About 3000 BC Neolithic (or New Stone Age) people crossed the narrow sea from Europe in small round boats of bent wood covered with animal skins. Each could carry one or two persons. These people kept animals and grew com crops, and knew how to make pottery. They probably came from either the Iberian (Spanish) peninsula or even the North African coast. They were small, dark, and long-headed people, and may be the forefathers of dark-haired inhabitants of Wales and Cornwall today. They settled in the western parts of Britain and Ireland, from Cornwall at the southwest end of Britain all the way to the far north.

These were the first of several waves of invaders before the first arrival of the Romans in 55 BC. It used to be thought that these waves of invaders marked fresh stages in British development. However, although they must have brought new ideas and methods, it is now thought that the changing pattern of Britain s prehistory was the result of local economic and social forces.

The great "public works" of this time, which needed a huge organization of labour, tell us a little of how prehistoric Britain was developing. The earlier of these works were great "barrows", or burial mounds, made of earth or stone. Most of these barrows are found on the chalk uplands of south Britain. Today these uplands have poor soil and few trees, but they were not like that then. They were airy woodlands that could easily be cleared for farming, and as a result were the most easily habitable part of the countryside. Eventually, and over a very long period, these areas became overfarmed, while by 1400 BC the climate became drier, and as a result this land could no longer support many people. It is difficult today to imagine these areas, particularly the uplands of Wiltshire and Dorset, as heavily peopled areas.

Yet the monuments remain. After 3000 BC the chalkland people started building great circles of earth banks and ditches.

Inside, they built wooden buildings and stone circles. These "henges", as they are called, were centres or religious, political and economic power. By far the most spectacular, both then and now, was Stonehenge, which was built in separate stages over a period of more than a thousand years. The precise purposes of Stonehenge remain a mystery, but during the second phase of building, after about 2400 BC, huge bluestones were brought to the site from south Wales. This could only have been achieved because the political authority of the area surrounding Stonehenge was recognised over a very large area, indeed probably over the whole of the British Isles. The movement of these bluestones was an extremely important event, the story of which was passed on from generation to generation. Three thousand years later, these unwritten memories were recorded in Geoffrey of Monmouth's His toni of Britain, written in 1136.

Stonehenge was almost certainly a sort of capital, to which the chiefs of other groups came from all over Britain. Certainly, earth or stone henges were built in many parts of Britain, as far as the Orkney Islands north of Scotland, and as far south as Cornwall. They seem to have been copies of the great Stonehenge in the south. In Ireland the centre of prehistoric civilisation grew around the River Boyne and at Tara in Ulster. The importance of these places in folk memory far outlasted the builders of the monuments.

After 2400 BC new groups of people arrived in southeast Britain from Europe. They were round-headed and strongly built, taller than Neolithic Britons. It is not known whether they invaded by armed force, or whether they were invited by Neolithic Britons because of their military or metal-working skills. Their influence was soon felt and, as a result, they became leaders of British society. Their arrival is marked by the first individual graves, furnished with pottery beakers, from which these people get their name: the "Beaker" people.

Why did people now decide to be buried separately and give up the old communal burial barrows? It is difficult to be certain, but it is thought that the old barrows were built partly to please the gods of the soil, in the hope that this would stop the chalk upland soil getting poorer. The Beaker people brought with them from Europe a new cereal, barley, which could grow almost anywhere. Perhaps they felt it was no longer necessary to please the gods of the chalk upland soil.

The Beaker people probably spoke an Indo-European language. They seem to have brought a single culture to the whole of Britain. They also brought skills to make bronze tools and these began to replace stone ones. But they accepted many of the old ways, Stonehenge remained the most important centre until 1300 BC. The Beaker people's richest graves were there, and they added a new circle of thirty stone columns, this time connected by stone lintels, or cross-pieces. British society continued to be centred on a number of henges across the countryside.

However, from about 1300 BC onwards the henge civilisation seems to have become less important, and was overtaken by a new form of society in southern England, that of a settled farming class. At first this farming society developed in order to feed the people at the henges, but eventually it became more important and powerful as it grew richer. The new farmers grew wealthy because they learned to enrich the soil with natural waste materials so that it did not become poor and useless. This change probably happened at about the same time that the chalk uplands were becoming drier. Family villages and fortified enclosures appeared across the landscape, in lower-lying areas as well as on the chalk hills, and the old central control of Stonehenge and the other henges was lost. From this time, too, power seems to have shifted to the Thames valley and southeast Britain. Except for short periods, political and economic power has remained in the southeast ever since. Hill-forts replaced henges as the centres of local power, and most of these were found in the southeast, suggesting that the land successfully supported more people here

than elsewhere.

There was another reason for the shift of power eastwards. A number of better-designed bronze swords have been found in the Thames valley, suggesting that the local people had more advanced metalworking skills. Many of these swords have been found in river beds, almost certainly thrown in for religious reasons. This custom may be the origin of the story of the legendary King Arthur's sword, which was given to him from out of the water and which was thrown back into the water when he died.

The Celts

Around 700 BC, another group of people began to arrive. Many of them were tall, and had fair or red hair and blue eyes. These were the Celts, who probably came from central Europe or further east, from southern Russia, and had moved slowly westwards in earlier centuries. The Celts were technically advanced. They knew how to work with iron, and could make better weapons than the people who used bronze. It is possible that they drove many of the older inhabitants westwards into Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The Celts began to control all the lowland areas of Britain, and were joined by new arrivals from the European mainland. They continued to arrive in one wave after another over the next seven hundred years.

The Celts are important in British history because they are the ancestors of many of the people in Highland Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and Cornwall today. The Iberian people of Wales and Cornwall took on the new Celtic culture. Celtic languages, which have been continuously used in some areas since that time, are still spoken. The British today are often described as Anglo-Saxon. It would be better to call them Anglo-Celt.

Our knowledge of the Celts is slight. As with previous groups of settlers, we do not even know for certain whether the Celts invaded Britain or came peacefully as a result of the lively trade with Europe from about 750 BC onwards. At first most of Celtic Britain seems to have developed in a generally similar way. But from about 500 BC trade contact with Europe declined, and regional differences between northwest and southeast Britain increased. The Celts were organised into different tribes, and tribal chiefs were chosen from each family or tribe, sometimes as the result of fighting matches between individuals, and sometimes by election.

The last Celtic arrivals from Europe were the Belgic tribes. It was natural for them to settle in the southeast of Britain, probably pushing other Celtic tribes northwards as they did so. At any rate, when Julius Caesar briefly visited Britain in 55 BC he saw that the Belgic tribes were different from the older inhabitants. "The interior is inhabited", he wrote, "by peoples who consider themselves indigenous, the coast by people who have crossed from Belgium. Nearly all of these still keep the names of the [European] tribes from which they came."

The Celtic tribes continued the same kind of agriculture as the Bronze Age people before them. But their use of iron technology and their introduction of more advanced ploughing methods made it possible for them to farm heavier soils. However, they continued to use, and build, hill-forts. The increase of these, particularly in the southeast, suggests that the Celts were highly successful farmers, growing enough food for a much larger population.

The hill-fort remained the centre for local groups. The insides of these hill-forts were filled with houses, and they became the simple economic capitals and smaller "towns" of the different tribal areas into which Britain was now divided. Today the empty hill-forts stand on lonely hilltops. Yet they remained local economic centres long after the Romans came to Britain, and long after they went.

Within living memory certain annual fairs were associated with hill-forts. For example, there was an annual September fair

on the site of a Dorset hill-fort, which was used by the writer Thomas Hardy in his novel Far from the Madding Crowd, published in 1874.

The Celts traded across tribal borders and trade was probably important for political and social contact between the tribes. Trade with Ireland went through the island of Anglesey. The two main trade outlets eastwards to Europe were the settlements along the Thames River in the south and on the Firth of Forth in the north. It is no accident that the present-day capitals of England and Scotland stand on or near these two ancient trade centres. Much trade, both inside and beyond Britain, was conducted by river and sea. For money the Celts used iron bars, until they began to copy the Roman coins they saw used in Gaul (France).

According to the Romans, the Celtic men wore shirts and breeches (knee-length trousers), and striped or checked cloaks fastened by a pin. It is possible that the Scottish tartan and dress developed from this "striped cloak". The Celts were also "very careful about cleanliness and neatness", as one Roman wrote. "Neither man nor woman," he went on, "however poor, was seen either ragged or dirty."

The Celtic tribes were ruled over by a warrior class, of which the priests, or Druids, seem to have been particularly important members. These Druids could not read or write, but they memorised all the religious teachings, the tribal laws, history, medicine and other knowledge necessary in Celtic society. The Druids from different tribes all over Britain probably met once a year. They had no temples, but they met in sacred groves of trees, on certain hills, by rivers or by river sources. We know little of their kind of worship except that at times it included human sacrifice.

During the Celtic period women may have had more independence than they had again for hundreds of years. When the Romans invaded Britain two of the largest tribes were ruled by women who fought from their chariots. The most powerful Celt to stand up to the Romans was a woman, Boadicea. She had become queen of her tribe when her husband had died. She was tall, with long red hair, and had a frightening appearance. In AD 61 she led her tribe against the Romans. She nearly drove them from Britain, and she destroyed London, the Roman capital, before she was defeated and killed. Roman writers commented on the courage and strength of women in battle, and leave an impression of a measure of equality between the sexes among the richer Celts.

**1.2 Roman Britain**

The name "Britain" comes from the word "Pretani", the Greco-Roman word for the inhabitants of Britain. The Romans mispronounced the word and called the island "Britannia".

The Romans had invaded because the Celts of Britain were working with the Celts of Gaul against them. The British Celts were giving them food, and allowing them to hide in Britain. There was another reason. The Celts used cattle to pull their ploughs and this meant that richer, heavier land could be farmed. Under the Celts Britain had become an important food producer because of its mild climate. It now exported com and animals, as well as hunting dogs and slaves, to the European mainland. The Romans could make use of British food for their own army fighting the Gauls.

The Romans brought the skills of reading and writing to Britain. The written word was important for spreading ideas and also for establishing power. As early as AD 80, as one Roman at the time noted, the governor Agricola "trained the sons of chiefs in the liberal arts ... the result was that the people who used to reject Latin began to use it in speech and writing. Further the wearing of our national dress came to be valued and the toga [the Roman cloak] came into fashion." While the Celtic peasantry remained illiterate and only Celtic-speaking, a number of town dwellers spoke Latin and Greek with ease, and the richer landowners in the country almost certainly used Latin. But Latin completely disappeared both in its spoken and written forms when

the Anglo-Saxons invaded Britain in the fifth century AD. Britain was probably more literate under the Romans than it was to be again until the fifteenth century.

Julius Caesar first came to Britain in 55 BC, but it was not until almost a century later, in AD 43, that a Roman army actually occupied Britain. The Romans were determined to conquer the whole island. They had little difficulty, apart from Boadiccas revolt, because they had a better trained army and because the Celtic tribes fought among themselves. The Romans considered the Celts as war-mad, "high spirited and quick for battle", a description some would still give the Scots, Irish and Welsh today.

The Romans established a Romano-British culture across the southern half or Britain, from the River Humber to the River Severn. This part of Britain was inside the empire. Beyond were the upland areas, under Roman control but not developed. These areas were watched from the towns of York, Chester and Caerleon in the western peninsula of Britain that later became known as Wales. Each of these towns was held by a Roman legion of about 7,000 men. The total Roman army in Britain was about 40,000 men.

The Romans could not conquer "Caledonia", as they called Scotland, although they spent over a century trying to do so. At last they built a strong wall along the northern border, named after the Emperor Hadrian who planned it. At the time, Hadrian s wall was simply intended to keep out raiders from the north. But it also marked the border between the two later countries, England and Scotland. Eventually, the border was established a few miles further north. Efforts to change it in later centuries did not succeed, mainly because on either side of the border an invading army found its supply line overstretched. A natural point of balance had been found.

Roman control of Britain came to an end as the empire began to collapse. The first signs were the attacks by Celts of Caledonia in AD 367. The Roman legions found it more and more difficult to stop the raiders from crossing Hadrian's wall. The same was happening on the European mainland as Germanic groups, Saxons and Franks, began to raid the coast of Gaul. In AD 409 Rome pulled its last soldiers out of Britain and the Romano-British, the Romanised Celts, were left to fight alone against the Scots, the Irish and Saxon raiders from Germany. The following year Rome itself fell to raiders. When Britain called to Rome for help against the raiders from Saxon Germany in the mid-fifth century, no answer came.

The most obvious characteristic of Roman Britain was its towns, which were the basis of Roman administration and civilisation. Many grew out of Celtic settlements, military camps or market centres. Broadly, there were three different kinds of town in Roman Britain, two of which were towns established by Roman charter. These were the colonicte, towns peopled by Roman settlers, and the municipia, large cities in which the whole population was given Roman citizenship. The third kind, the civitas, included the old Celtic tribal capitals, through which the Romans administered Celtic population in the countryside. At first these towns had no walls. Then, probably from the end of the second century to the end of the third century AD, almost every town was given walls. At first many of these were no more than earthworks, but by AD 300 all towns had thick stone walls.

The Romans left about twenty large towns of about 5,000 inhabitants, and almost one hundred smaller ones. Many of these towns were at first army camps, and the Latin word for camp, castra, has remained part of many town names to this day (with the ending Chester, caster or cester): Gloucester, Leicester, Doncaster, Winchester, Chester, Lancaster and many others besides. These towns were built with stone as well as wood, and had planned streets, markets and shops. Some buildings had central heating. They were connected by roads which were so

well built that they survived when later roads broke up. These roads continued to be used long after the Romans left, and became the main roads of modem Britain. Six of these Roman roads met in London, a capital city of about 20,000 people. London was twice the size of Paris, and possibly the most important trading centre of northern Europe, because southeast Britain produced so much com for export.

Outside the towns, the biggest change during the Roman occupation was the growth of large farms, called "villas". These belonged to the richer Britons who were, like the townspeople, more Roman than Celt in their manners. Each villa had many workers. The villas were usually close to towns so that the crops could be sold easily. There was a growing difference between the rich and those who did the actual work on the land. These, and most people, still lived in the same kind of round huts and villages which the Celts had been living in four hundred years earlier, when the Romans arrived.

In some ways life in Roman Britain seems very civilised, but it was also hard for all except the richest. The bodies buried in a Roman graveyard at York show that life expectancy was low. Half the entire population died between the ages of twenty and forty, while 15 per cent died before reaching the age of twenty.

It is very difficult to be sure how many people were living in Britain when the Romans left. Probably it was as many as five million, partly because of the peace and the increased economic life which the Romans had brought to the country.

**1.3 The Anglo-Saxon Conquest and the Danish Invasions**

The wealth of Britain by the fourth century, the result of its mild climate and centuries of peace, was a temptation to the greedy. At first the Germanic tribes only raided Britain, but after AD 430 they began to settle. The newcomers were warlike and illiterate. We owe our knowledge of this period mainly to an

English monk named Bede, who lived three hundred years later. His story of events in his Ecclesiastical History of the English People has been proved generally correct by archaeological evidence.

Bede tells us that the invaders came from three powerful Germanic tribes, the Saxons, Angles and Jutes. The Jutes settled mainly in Kent and along the south coast, and were soon considered no different from the Angles and Saxons. The Angles settled in the east, and also in the north Midlands, while the Saxons settled between the Jutes and the Angles in a band of land from the Thames Estuary westwards. The Anglo-Saxon migrations gave the larger part of Britain its new name, England, "the land of the Angles".

The British Celts fought the raiders and settlers from Germany as well as they could. However, during the next hundred years they were slowly pushed westwards until by 570 they were forced west of Gloucester. Finally most were driven into the mountains in the far west, which the Saxons called "Weallas", or "Wales", meaning "the land of the foreigners". Some Celts were driven into Cornwall, where they later accepted the rule of Saxon lords. In the north, other Celts were driven into the lowlands of the country which became known as Scotland. Some Celts stayed behind, and many became slaves of the Saxons. Hardly anything is left of Celtic language or culture in England, except for the names of some rivers, Thames, Mersey, Severn and Avon, and two large cities, London and Leeds.

The strength of Anglo-Saxon culture is obvious even today. Days of the week were named after Germanic gods: Tig (Tuesday), Wodin (Wednesday), Thor (Thursday), Frei (Friday). New place-names appeared on the map. The first of these show that the earliest Saxon villages, like the Celtic ones, were family villages. The ending -ing meant folk or family, thus "Reading" is the place of the family of Rada, "Hastings" of the family of Hasta. Ham means farm, ton means settlement. Birmingham,

Nottingham or Southampton, for example, are Saxon place-names. Because the Anglo-Saxon kings often established settlements, Kingston is a frequent place-name.

The Anglo-Saxons established a number of kingdoms, some of which still exist in county or regional names to this day: Essex (East Saxons), Sussex (South Saxons), Wessex (West Saxons), Middlesex (probably a kingdom of Middle Saxons), East Anglia (East Angles). By the middle of the seventh century the three largest kingdoms, those of Northumbria, Mercia and Wessex, were the most powerful.

It was not until a century later that one of these kings, King Offa of Mercia (757-96), claimed "kingship of the English". He had good reason to do so. He was powerful enough to employ thousands of men to build a huge dyke, or earth wall, the length of the Welsh border to keep out the troublesome Celts. But although he was the most powerful king of his time, he did not control all of England.

The power of Mercia did not survive after Offa's death. At that time, a king's power depended on the personal loyalty of his followers. After his death the next king had to work hard to rebuild these personal feelings of loyalty. Most people still believed, as the Celts had done, that a man's first duty was to his own family. However, things were changing. The Saxon kings began to replace loyalty to family with loyalty to lord and king.

*Government and society*

The Saxons created institutions which made the English state strong for the next 500 years. One of these institutions was the King's Council, called the Witan. The Witan probably grew out of informal groups of senior warriors and churchmen to whom kings like Offa had turned for advice or support on difficult matters. By the tenth century the Witan was a formal body, issuing laws and charters. It was not at all democratic, and the king could decide to ignore the Witan's advice. But he knew that it might be dangerous to do so. For the Witan's authority was based on its right to choose kings, and to agree the use of the king's laws. Without its support the king's own authority was in danger. The Witan established a system which remained an important part of the king's method of government. Even today, the king or queen has a Privy> Council, a group of advisers on the affairs of state.

The Saxons divided the land into new administrative areas, based on shires, or counties. These shires, established by the end of the tenth century, remained almost exactly the same for a thousand years. "Shire" is the Saxon word, "county" the Norman one, but both are still used. (In 1974 the counties were reorganised, but the new system is very like the old one.) Over each shire was appointed a shire reeve, the king's local administrator. In time his name became shortened to "sheriff.

Anglo-Saxon technology changed the shape of English agriculture. The Celts had kept small, square fields which were well suited to the light plough they used, drawn either by an animal or two people. This plough could turn comers easily. The Anglo-Saxons introduced a far heavier plough which was better able to plough in long straight lines across the field. It was particularly useful for cultivating heavier soils. But it required six or eight oxen to pull it, and it was difficult to turn. This heavier plough led to changes in land ownership and organisation. In order to make the best use of village land, it was divided into two or three very large fields. These were then divided again into long thin strips. Each family had a number of strips in each of these fields, amounting probably to a family "holding" of twenty or so acres. Ploughing these long thin strips was easier because it avoided the problem of turning. Few individual families could afford to keep a team of oxen, and these had to be shared on a co-operative basis.

One of these fields would be used for planting spring crops, and another for autumn crops. The third area would be left to rest for a year, and with the other areas after harvest, would be used as

common land for animals to feed on. This Anglo-Saxon pattern, which became more and more common, was the basis of English agriculture for a thousand years, until the eighteenth century.

It needs only a moment's thought to recognise that the fair division of land and of teams of oxen, and the sensible management of village land shared out between families, meant that villagers had to work more closely together than they had ever done before.

The Saxons settled previously unfarmed areas. They cut down many forested areas in valleys to farm the richer lowland soil, and they began to drain the wet land. As a result, almost all the villages which appear on eighteenth-century maps already existed by the eleventh century.

In each district was a "manor" or large house. This was a simple building where local villagers came to pay taxes, where justice was administered, and where men met together to join the Anglo-Saxon army, the fyrd. The lord of the manor had to organise all this, and make sure village land was properly shared. It was the beginning of the manorial system which reached its fullest development under the Normans.

At first the lords, or aldermen, were simply local officials. But by the beginning of the eleventh century they were warlords, and were often called by a new Danish name, earl. Both words, alderman and earl, remain with us today: aldermen are elected officers in local government, and earls are high ranking nobles. It was the beginning of a class system, made up of king, lords, soldiers and workers on the land. One other important class developed during the Saxon period, the men of learning. These came from the Christian Church.

*Christianity: the partnership of Church and state*

We cannot know how or when Christianity first reached Britain, but it was certainly well before Christianity was accepted by the Roman Emperor Constantine in the early fourth century

AD. In the last hundred years of Roman government Christianity became firmly established across Britain, both in Roman-controlled areas and beyond. However, the Anglo-Saxons belonged to an older Germanic religion, and they drove the Celts into the west and north. In the Celtic areas Christianity continued to spread, bringing paganism to an end. The map of Wales shows a number of place-names beginning or ending with llan, meaning the site of a small Celtic monastery around which a village or town grew.

In 597 Pope Gregory the Great sent a monk, Augustine, to re-establish Christianity in England. He went to Canterbury, the capital of the king of Kent. He did so because the king's wife came from Europe and was already Christian. Augustine became the first Archbishop of Canterbury in 601. He was very successful. Several ruling families in England accepted Christianity. But Augustine and his group of monks made little progress with the ordinary people. This was partly because Augustine was interested in establishing Christian authority, and that meant bringing rulers to the new faith.

It was the Celtic Church which brought Christianity to the ordinary people of Britain. The Celtic bishops went out from their monasteries of Wales, Ireland and Scotland, walking from village to village teaching Christianity. In spite of the differences between Anglo-Saxons and Celts, these bishops seem to have been readily accepted in Anglo-Saxon areas. The bishops from the Roman Church lived at the courts of the kings, which they made centres of Church power across England. The two Christian Churches, Celtic and Roman, could hardly have been more different in character. One was most interested in the hearts of ordinary people, the other was interested in authority and organisation. The competition between the Celtic and Roman Churches reached a crisis because they disagreed over the date of Easter. In 663 at the Synod (meeting) of Whitby the king of Northumbria decided to support the Roman Church. The Celtic Church retreated as Rome

extended its authority over all Christians, even in Celtic parts of the island.

England had become Christian very quickly. By 660 only Sussex and the Isle of Wight had not accepted the new faith. Twenty years later, English teachers returned to the lands from which the Aglo-Saxons had come, bringing Christianity to much of Germany.

Saxon kings helped the Church to grow, but the Church also increased the power of kings. Bishops gave kings their support, which made it harder for royal power to be questioned. Kings had "God's approval". The value of Church approval was all the greater because of the uncertainty of the royal succession. An eldest son did not automatically become king, as kings were chosen from among the members of the royal family, and any member who had enough soldiers might try for the throne. In addition, at a time when one king might try to conquer a neighbouring kingdom, he would probably have a son to whom he would wish to pass this enlarged kingdom when he died. And so when King Offa arranged for his son to be crowned as his successor, he made sure that this was done at a Christian ceremony led by a bishop. It was good political propaganda, because it suggested that kings were chosen not only by people but also by God.

There were other ways in which the Church increased the power of the English state. It established monasteries, or minsters, for example Westminster, which were places of learning and education. These monasteries trained the men who could read and write, so that they had the necessary skills for the growth of royal and Church authority. The king who made most use of the Church was Alfred., the great king who ruled Wessex from 871-899. He used the literate men of the Church to help establish a system of law, to educate the people and to write down important matters. He started the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the most important source, together with Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People,

for understanding the period.

During the next hundred years, laws were made on a large number of matters. By the eleventh century royal authority probably went wider and deeper in England than in any other European country.

This process gave power into the hands of those who could read and write, and in this way class divisions were increased. The power of landlords, who had been given land by the king, was increased because their names were written down. Peasants, who could neither read nor write, could lose their traditional rights to their land, because their rights were not registered.

The Anglo-Saxon kings also preferred the Roman Church to the Celtic Church for economic reasons. Villages and towns grew around the monasteries and increased local trade. Many bishops and monks in England were from the Frankish lands (France and Germany) and elsewhere. They were invited by English rulers who wished to benefit from closer Church and economic contact with Europe. Most of these bishops and monks seem to have come from churches or monasteries along Europe's vital trade routes. In this way close contact with many parts of Europe was encouraged. In addition they all used Latin, the written language of Rome, and this encouraged English trade with the continent. Increased literacy itself helped trade. Anglo-Saxon England became well known in Europe for its exports of woollen goods, cheese, hunting dogs, pottery and metal goods. It imported wine, fish, pepper, jewellery and wheel-made pottery.

*The Vikings*

Towards the end of the eighth century new raiders were tempted by Britain's wealth. These were the Vikings, a word which probably means either "pirates" or "the people of the sea inlets", and they came from Norway and Denmark. Like the Anglo-Saxons they only raided at first. They burnt churches and monasteries along the east, north and west coasts of Britain and

Ireland. London was itself raided in 842.

In 865 the Vikings invaded Britain once it was clear that the quarrelling Anglo-Saxon kingdoms could not keep them out. This time they came to conquer and to settle. The Vikings quickly accepted Christianity and did not disturb the local population. By 875 only King Alfred in the west of Wessex held out against the Vikings, who had already taken most of England. After some serious defeats Alfred won a decisive battle in 878, and eight years later he captured London. He was strong enough to make a treaty with the Vikings.

Viking rule was recognised in the east and north of England. It was called the Danelaw, the land where the law of the Danes ruled. In the rest of the country Alfred was recognised as king. During his struggle against the Danes, he had built walled settlements to keep them out. These were called burghs. They became prosperous market towns, and the word, now usually spelt borough, is one of the commonest endings to place names, as well as the name of the unit of municipal or town administration today.

By 950 England seemed rich and peaceful again after the troubles of the Viking invasion. But soon afterwards the Danish Vikings started raiding westwards. The Saxon king, Ethelred, decided to pay the Vikings to stay away. To find the money he set a tax on all his people, called Danegeld, or "Danish money". It was the beginning of a regular tax system of the people which would provide the money for armies. The effects of this tax were most heavily felt by the ordinary villagers, because they had to provide enough money for their village landlord to pay Danegeld.

When Ethelred died Cnut (or Canute), the leader of the Danish Vikings, controlled much of England. He became king for the simple reason that the royal council, the Witan, and everyone else, feared disorder. Rule by a Danish king was far better than rule by no one at all. Cnut died in 1035, and his son died shortly after, in 1040. The Witan chose Edward, one of Saxon Ethelred's sons, to be king.

Edward, known as "the Confessor", was more interested in the Church than in kingship. Church building had been going on for over a century, and he encouraged it. By the time Edward died there was a church in almost every village. The pattern of the English village, with its manor house and church, dates from this time. Edward started a new church fit for a king at Westminster, just outside the city of London. In fact Westminster Abbey was a Norman, not a Saxon building, because he had spent almost all his life in Normandy, and his mother was a daughter of the duke of Normandy. As their name suggests, the Normans were people from the north. They were the children and grandchildren of Vikings who had captured, and settled in, northern France. They had soon become French in their language and Christian in their religion. But they were still well known for their fighting skills.

Edward only lived until 1066, when he died without an obvious heir. The question of who should follow him as king was one of the most important in English history. Edward had brought many Normans to his English court from France. These Normans were not liked by the more powerful Saxon nobles, particularly by the most powerful family of Wessex, the Godwinsons. It was a Godwinson, Harold, whom the Witan chose to be the next king of England. Harold had already shown his bravery and ability. He had no royal blood, but he seemed a good choice for the throne of England.

Harold's right to the English throne was challenged by Duke William of Normandy. William had two claims to the English throne. His first claim was that King Edward had promised it to him. The second claim was that Harold, who had visited William in 1064 or 1065, had promised William that he, Harold, would not try to take the throne for himself. Harold did not deny this second claim, but said that he had been forced to make the promise, and that because it was made unwillingly he was not tied

by it.

Harold was faced by two dangers, one in the south and one in the north. The Danish Vikings had not given up their claim to the English throne. In 1066 Harold had to march north into Yorkshire to defeat the Danes. No sooner had he defeated them than he learnt that William had landed in England with an army. His men were tired, but they had no time to rest. They marched south as fast as possible.

Harold decided not to wait for the whole Saxon army, the fyrd, to gather because William s army was small. He thought he could beat them with the men who had done so well against the Danes. However, the Norman soldiers were better armed, better organised, and were mounted on horses. If he had waited, Harold might have won. But he was defeated and killed in battle near Hastings.

William marched to London, which quickly gave in when he began to bum villages outside the city. He was crowned king of England in Edward’s new church of Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day, 1066. A new period had begun.

England has always played the most powerful part in the history of the British Isles. However, the other three countries, Wales, Ireland and Scotland, have a different history. Until recently few historians looked at British history except from an English point of view. But the stories of Wales, Ireland and Scotland are also important, because their people still feel different from the Anglo-Saxon English. The experience of the Welsh, Irish and Scots helps to explain the feeling they have today.

*Wales*

By the eighth century most of the Celts had been driven into the Welsh peninsula. They were kept out of England by Offa's Dyke, the huge earth wall built in AD 779. These Celts, called Welsh by the Anglo-Saxons, called themselves cymry, "fellowcountrymen".

Because Wales is a mountainous country, the cymry could only live in the crowded valleys. The rest of the land was rocky and too poor for anything except keeping animals. For this reason the population remained small. It only grew to over half a million in the eighteenth century. Life was hard and so was the behaviour of the people. Slavery was common, as it had been all through Celtic Britain.

Society was based on family groupings, each of which owned one or more village or farm settlement. One by one in each group a strong leader made himself king. These men must have been tribal chiefs to begin with, who later managed to become overlords over neighbouring family groups. Each of these kings tried to conquer the others, and the idea of a high, or senior, king developed.

The early kings travelled around their kingdoms to remind the people of their control. They travelled with their hungry followers and soldiers. The ordinary people ran away into the hills and woods when the king's men approached their village.

Life was dangerous, treacherous and bloody. In 1043 the king of Glamorgan died of old age. It was an unusual event, because between 949 and 1066 no less than thirty-five Welsh rulers died violently, usually killed by a cymry, a fellow countryman.

In 1039 Gruffydd ap (son of) Llewelyn was the first Welsh high king strong enough to rule over all Wales. He was also the last, and in order to remain in control he spent almost the whole of his reign fighting his enemies. Like many other Welsh rulers, Gruffydd was killed by a cymry while defending Wales against the Saxons. Welsh kings after him were able to rule only after they had promised loyalty to Edward the Confessor, king of England. The story of an independent and united Wales was over almost as soon as it had begun.

*Ireland*

Ireland was never invaded by either the Romans or the Anglo-Saxons. It was a land of monasteries and had a flourishing Celtic culture. As in Wales, people were known by the family grouping they belonged to. Outside their tribe they had no protection and no name of their own. They had only the name of their tribe. The kings in this tribal society were chosen by election. The idea was that the strongest man should lead. In fact the system led to continuous challenges.

Five kingdoms grew up in Ireland: Ulster in the north, Munster in the southwest, Leinster in the southeast, Connaught in the west, with Tara as the seat of the high kings of Ireland.

Christianity came to Ireland in about AD 430. The beginning of Ireland's history dates from that time, because for the first time there were people who could write down events. The message of Christianity was spread in Ireland by a British slave, Patrick, who became the "patron saint" of Ireland. Christianity brought writing, which weakened the position of the Druids, who depended on memory and the spoken word. Christian monasteries grew up, frequently along the coast.

This period is often called Ireland's "golden age". Invaders were unknown and culture flowered. But it is also true that the five kingdoms were often at war, each trying to gain advantage over the other, often with great cruelty.

This "golden age" suddenly ended with the arrival of Viking raiders, who stole all that the monasteries had. Very little was left except the stone memorials that the Vikings could not carry away.

The Vikings, who traded with Constantinople (now Istanbul), Italy, and with central Russia, brought fresh economic and political action into Irish life. Viking raids forced the Irish to unite. In 859 Ireland chose its first high king, but it was not an effective solution because of the quarrels that took place each time a new high king was chosen. Viking trade led to the first towns and ports. For the Celts, who had always lived in small settlements, these were revolutionary. Dublin, Irelands future

capital, was founded by the Vikings.

As an effective method of rule the high kingship of Ireland lasted only twelve years, from 1002 to 1014, while Ireland was ruled by Brian Born. He is still looked back on as Irelands greatest rule. He tried to create one single Ireland, and encouraged the growth of organisation - in the Church, in administration, and in learning.

Brian Born died in battle against the Vikings. One of the five Irish kings, the king of Leinster, fought on the Vikings side. Just over a century later another king of Leinster invited the Normans of England to help him against high king. This gave the Normans the excuse they wanted to enlarge their kingdom.

*Scotland*

As a result of its geography, Scotland has two different societies. In the centre of Scotland mountains stretch to the far north and across to the west, beyond which lie many islands. To the east and to the south the lowland hills are gentler, and much of the countryside is like England, rich, welcoming and east to farm. North of the "Highland Line", as the division between highland and lowland is called, people stayed tried to their own family groups. South and east of this line society was more easily influenced by the changes taking place in England.

Scotland was populated by four separate groups of people. The main group, the Piets, lived mostly in the north and northeast. They spoke Celtic as well as another, probably older, language completely unconnected with any known language today, and they seem to have been the earliest inhabitants of the land. The Piets were different from the Celts because they inherited their rights, their names and property from their mothers, not from their fathers.

The non- Pictish inhabitants were mainly Scots. The Scots were Celtic settlers who had started to move into the western Highlands from Ireland in the fourth century.

In 843 the Pictish and Scottish kingdoms were united a Scottish king, who could also probably claim the Pictish throne through his mother, in this way obeying both Scottish and Pictish rules of kingship.

The third group were the Britons, who inhabited the Lowlands, and had been part of the Romano-British world. (The name of their kingdom, Strathclyde, was used again in the county reorganisation of 1974.) They had probably given up their old tribal way of life by the sixth century. Finally, there were Angles from Northumbria who had pushed northwards into the Scottish Lowlands.

Unity between Piets, Scots and Britons was achieved for several reasons. They all shared a common Celtic culture, language and background. Their economy mainly depended on keeping animals. These animals were owned by the tribe as a whole, and for this reason land was also held by tribes, not by individual people. The common economic system increased their feeling of belonging to the same king of society and the feeling of difference from the agricultural Lowlands. The sense of common culture may have been increased by marriage alliances between tribes. This idea of common landholding remained strong until the tribes of Scotland, called "clans", collapsed in the eighteenth century.

The spread of Celtic Christianity also helped to unite the people. The first Christian mission to Scotland in about AD 400. Later, in 563, Columba, known as the "Dove of the Church", came from Ireland. Through his work both Highland Scots and Piets were brought to Christianity. He even, so it is said, defeated a monster in Loch Ness, the first mention of this famous creature. By the time of the Synod of Whitby in 663, the Piets, Scots, and Britons had all been brought closer together by Christianity.

The Angles were very different from the Celts. They had arrived in Britain in family groups, but they soon began to accept authority from people outside their own family. This was partly due to their way of life. Although they kept some animals, they spent more time growing crops. This meant that land was held by individual people, each man working in his own field. Land was distributed for farming by the local lord. This system encouraged the Angles of Scotland to develop a non-tribal system of control, as the people of England further south were doing. This increased their feeling of difference from the Celtic tribal Highlanders further north.

Finally, as in Ireland and in Wales, foreign invaders increased the speed of political change. Vikings attacked the coastal areas of Scotland, and they settled on many of the islands, Shetland, the Orkneys, the Hebrides, and the Isle of Man southwest of Scotland. In order to resist them, Piets and Scots fought together against the enemy raiders and settlers. When they could not push them out of the islands and coastal areas, they had to deal with them politically. At first the Vikings, or "Norsemen", still served the king of Norway. But communications with Norway were difficult. Slowly the earls of Orkney and other areas found it easier to accept the king of Scots as their overlord, rather than the more distant king of Norway.

However, as the Welsh had also discovered, the English were a greater danger than the Vikings. In 934 the Scots were seriously defeated by a Wessex army pushing northwards. The Scots decided to seek the friendship of the English, because of the likely losses from war. England was obviously stronger than Scotland but, luckily for the Scots, both the north of England and Scotland were difficult to control from London. The Scots hoped that if they were reasonably peaceful the Sassenachs, as they called the Saxon (and still call the English), would leave them alone.

Scotland remained a difficult country to rule even from its capital, Edinburgh. Anyone looking at a map of Scotland can immediately see that control of the Highlands and islands was a great problem. Travel was often impossible in winter, and slow and difficult in summer. It was easy for a clan chief or noble to

throw off the rule of the king.

1.4 The Norman Conquest

William the Conqueror's coronation did not go as planned. When the people shouted "God Save the King" the nervous Norman guard at Westminster Abbey thought they were going to attack William. In their fear they set fire to nearby houses and the coronation ceremony ended in disorder.

Although William was now crowned king, his conquest had only just begun, and the fighting lasted for another five years. There was an Anglo-Saxon rebellion against the Normans every year until 1070. The small Norman army marched from village to village, destroying places it could not control, and building forts to guard others. It was a true army of occupation for at least twenty years. The north was particularly hard to control, and the Norman army had no mercy. When the Saxons fought back, the Normans burnt, destroyed and killed. Between Durham and York not a single house was left standing, and it took a century for the north to recover.

Few Saxon lords kept their lands and those who did were the very small number who had accepted William immediately. All the others lost everything. By 1086, twenty years after the arrival of the Normans, only two of the greater landlords and only two bishops were Saxon. William gave the Saxon lands to his Norman nobles. After each English rebellion there was more land to give away. His army included Norman and other French land seekers. Over 4,000 Saxon landlords were replaced by 200 Norman ones.

William was careful in the way he gave land to his nobles. The king of France was less powerful than many of the great landlords, or whom William was the outstanding example. In England, as each new area of land was captured, William gave parts of it as a reward to his captains. This meant that they held separate small pieces of land in different parts of the country so that no noble could easily or quickly gather his fighting men to rebel. William only gave some of his nobles larger estates along the troublesome borders with Wales and Scotland. At the same time he kept enough land for himself to make sure he was much stronger than his nobles. Of all the farmland of England he gave half to the Norman nobles, a quarter to the Church, and kept a fifth himself. He kept the Saxon system of sheriffs, and used these as a balance to local nobles. As a result England was different from the rest of Europe because it had one powerful family, instead of a large number of powerful nobles. William, and the kings after him, thought of England as their personal property.

William organised his English kingdom according to the feudal system which had already begun to develop in England before his arrival. The word "feudalism" comes from the French word fen, which the Normans used to refer to land held in return for duty or service to a lord. The basis of feudal society was the holding of land, and its main purpose was economic. The central idea was that all land was owned by the king but it was held by others, called "vassals", in return for services and goods. The king gave large estates to his main nobles in return for a promise to serve him in war for up to forty days. The nobles also had to give part of the produce of the land. The greater nobles gave part of their lands to lesser nobles, knights, and other "freemen". Some freemen paid for the land by doing military service, while others paid rent. The noble kept "serf" to work on his own land. These were not free to leave the estate, and were often little better than slaves.

There were two basic principles to feudalism: every man had a lord, and every lord had land. The king was connected through this "chain" of people to the lowest man in the country. At each level a man had to promise loyalty and service to his lord. This promise was usually made with the lord sitting on his chair and his vassal kneeling before him, his hands placed between those of his

lord. This was called "homage", and has remained part of the coronation ceremony of British kings and queens until now. On the other hand, each lord had responsibilities to his vassals. He had to give them land and protection.

When a noble died his son usually took over his estate. But first he had to receive permission from the king and make a special payment. If he was still a child the king would often take the produce of the state until the boy was old enough to look after the estate himself. In this way the king could benefit from the death of a noble. If all the noble's family died the land went back to the king, who would be expected to give it to another deserving noble. But the king often kept the land for some years, using its wealth, before giving it to another noble.

If the king did not give the nobles land they would not fight for him. Between 1066 and the mid-fourteenth century there were only thirty years of complete peace. So feudal duties were extremely important. The king had to make sure he had enough satisfied nobles who would be willing to fight for him.

William gave our land all over England to his nobles. By 1086 he wanted to know exactly who owned which piece of land, and how much it was worth. He needed this information so that he could plan his economy, find out how much was produced and how much he could ask in tax. He therefore sent a team of people all through England to make a complete economic survey. His men asked all kinds of questions at each settlement: How much land was there? Who owned it? How much was it worth? How many families, ploughs and sheep were there? And so on. This survey was the only one of its kind in Europe. Not surprisingly, it was most unpopular with the people, because they felt they could not escape from its findings. It so reminded them of the paintings of the Day of Judgement, or "doom", on the walls of their churches that they called it the "Domesday" Book. The name stuck. The Domesday Book still exists, and gives us an extraordinary amount of information about England at this time.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What do we know about the Iberians and the Beaker people? What traces have their culture left on the face of the land?
2. What were the major achievements of Celtic civilization?
3. What part of Britain was latinized during the Roman occupation? How did the Roman way of life influence the life of the Celts? What traces are there of Roman rule in Britain?
4. Why is the Germanic Conquest one of the governing events in the English history? What was the fate of the Celts as a result of the Anglo-Saxon conquest? What forms of governance and institutions were created by the Anglo-Saxons? How did the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity facilitate the political unity and influence the cultural development of Britain?
5. What territory of Britain did the Danes manage to conqueur? How did the Danish settlers influence the development of the country in the 10th-l 1th centuries?
6. What were the reasons and the pretext of the Norman invasion? What were the reasons for the defeat of the Anglo-Saxons at Hastings? What made it possible for William to strengthen his royal power so greatly? What was the Domesday Book? What useful information does it give us about England in the second half of the 11th century? How did the registration consolidate the position of the Norman conquerors in England?

2. POPULATION OF BRITAIN TODAY: THE SOCIAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Ethnic Composition and Language Variation

2.2 Demographic Trends. Age and Sex Structure. Distribution of Population.

The Family. Marriage and Divorce. The Status of Women. Social class.

2.3 Ethnic minorities

2.4 Living Standards

**2.1 Ethnic Composition and Language Variation.**

People in the four lands of Britain derive from a host of **ancestral sources**, notably:

* the prehistoric cultures which produced such impressive monuments as the stone circles of Avebury and Stonehenge;
* the ancient Celtic peoples who inhabited western and central Europe;
* the Romans who occupied Britain for over 300 years from the invasion in AD 43;
* the Angles, Saxons and Jutes - Germanic peoples who began raiding and settling in Britain from the third century;
* Scots from Ireland, who began to settle in what became known as Scotland in the sixth century (merging with the indigenous Piets to form one kingdom under Kenneth Macalpin in the ninth century);
* the Vikings from Scandinavia, who pillaged and settled areas of Britain and Ireland from the end of the eighth century; and
* the Normans from France, who invaded England in 1066.

The last thousand years have witnessed the assimilation of all these strands — and many new ones besides, following on from

global exploration, the expansion of trade and international rivalry, and the growth of the Empire.

At the same time political, social, economic and religious trends, pressures and crises have all evolved to create the beliefs, lifestyle and expectations that are prevalent among the people today.

English is the main **language** spoken in Britain, although with many regional variations in terms of accept and phraseology. It is also one of the most widely used in the world; recent estimates suggest that over 337 million people speak it as their first language, with a similar number speaking it as a second language. Modem English derives primarily from one of the dialects of Anglo-Saxon, but has been very greatly influenced by other languages overtime.

About one-fifth of the population of Wales speak the Welsh language, which is of Celtic origin. They are concentrated in the rural north and west, where Welsh remains the first language of most of the population. Both the Government and voluntary groups have taken steps to revive the use of Welsh. Bilingual education in schools is encouraged and there has been an extended use of Welsh for official purposes and in broadcasting. In the context of dealing with public authorities and the administration of justice in Wales, Welsh and English are treated on an equal basis.

Gaelic, also a language of Celtic origin, is still spoken by some 70,000 people in Scotland; the greatest concentration of Gaelic speakers is in the islands of the Hebrides. People in the central lowlands of Scotland have for centuries spoken Scots, a dialect derived from the Northumbrian branch of Old English. This has its own recognised literary tradition and has seen a revival in poetry in the 20th century. Many words and phrases from the Scots tongue are retained in the everyday English which is spoken throughout Scotland.

Many other languages are spoken by the minority ethnic communities living in Britain.

**2.2 Demographic Trends. Age and Sex Structure. Distribution of Population. The Family. Marriage and Divorce. The Status of Women**

Demographic trends

Britain has a population of about 64 million people, the 17th largest in the world. The great majority, 49.3 million, live in

England; Scotland has just over 5 million people, Wales 2.9 million and Northern Ireland about 1.7 million.

The population density is well above the European Union average. England is the most densely populated, with 373 people per sq km, and Scotland the least, with 67 people per sq km. The great majority of people are concentrated in towns and cities, although there has been a trend, especially in the capital London, for people to move away from congested urban centres into the suburbs.

In 1997 there were 726,000 live births in Britain, compared with 633,000 deaths. The birth rate is relatively low at 12.3 live births per 1,000 population. This in part due to a trend towards later marriage and towards postponing births.

The average age of women having children has risen to over 28 years in England and Wales. There is also a greater preference for smaller families than in the past, which has led to a significant decline in the proportion of families with four or more children. In addition, more widespread and effective contraception has mode it easier to plan families.

Life expectancy for men in Britain is about 74 years and for women 79 years (compared with 49 years for men and 52 years for women at the start of the century). The general death rate is 10.4 per 1,000 of the population. There has been a decline in mortality at most ages, particularly among children, reflecting better nutrition, rising living standards, medical advances and improved health measures, wider education and the smaller size of families.

Deaths caused by circulatory diseases (including heart attacks and strokes) now account for nearly half of all deaths, and mortality from heart disease in England and Wales remains high compared with that of other development countries.

The next largest cause of death is cancer, which is responsible for one-quarter of deaths. There is a national health strategy for addressing the major causes of premature death and preventable illness among people in Britain.

Britain has one of the highest marriage and divorce rates in the European Union. There are 309,000 marriages each year in Britain, of which about 40 per cent are remarriages of one or both parties. Of the population ages 16 or over in England and Wales 55 per cent are married, 28 per cent are single, 9 per cent are widowed and 8 per cent are divorced. The average age for first marriages in England and Wales is now 29 for men and 27 for women.

In England and Wales there are about 14 divorces for every 1,000 married couples.

The average age of spouses at the time of divorce is now about 38 for men and just over 35 for women. Divorce rates are lower in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

In common with many other Western European countries, there has been an increase in cohabitation (unmarried couples living together) in Britain. About 14 per cent of non-married men and women aged 16 and over in Great Britain are cohabiting. There is some evidence of a growing number of stable non-married relationships. Over half of all births outside marriage (which account for over one third of live births in Britain) are registered by both parents giving a single address as their place of residence.

*Elderly people.* One of the most significant changes in the age structure of Britain's population over the last 30 years has been the increasing proportion of people over retirement age (65 for men and 60 for women) - some 11 million today, and their numbers continued to grow. This has important implications for social services provision into the next century.

Most elderly people in Britain live healthy and independent lives. Nearly all want to be a part of the community, living in their

own homes. Many view their later years as an opportunity to do the things they never previously had the time for, or to take on new interests or challenges. For instance, adult educational and recreational courses run by local authorities throughout Britain are well attended by older people, and some sports, such as bowls, attract many elderly participants.

Yet a lot of older people - perhaps living alone, in poor health or disabled in some way - have important needs. In addition to the large amount of willing help from relatives, neighbours and friends, practical support for Britain's elderly people is provided by the social services authorities, voluntary organisations and, to a lesser extent, the private sector.

Services for elderly people are designed to help them live at home whenever possible. In fact, only about 5 per cent of people aged over 65 in Britain live in institutional accommodation. These services may include advice and help from visiting social workers, assistance with domestic chores and the provision of meals in the home. Day centres and lunch clubs are very popular among older people as they provide, in addition to a hot meal and facilities such as a laundry, an important focal point for social contact. They may also offer leisure and educational activities, many of which are run by older people themselves.

Local authorities and voluntary organisations operate special transport services to enable less mobile elderly people to get to day centres or to visit the shops, the doctor, family or friends. There are concessionary fares for resident pensioners on most bus services, and special discounts are available on coach and rail travel.

Special housing needs for the elderly are met by local authorities, housing associations, voluntary bodies and the private sector. Sheltered housing schemes may consist of groups of flats or small houses where older people can live independently but still have the support of a resident warden. For those people who are too infirm to continue to live independently there are residential homes providing full board, or nursing homes offering 24-hour personal care.

*Young people*. The home is the central focus of most young people's lives in Britain, particularly for those who are still attending school. The majority rely upon their home environment as a place of security and upon their parents as the main providers of food, money and other necessary amenities for life - as well as general advice. Young people spend a large proportion of their leisure time in the home with other members of their family or with friends.

After the home, school is the main social environment where children not only receive their formal education but also develop their identities within peer groups. All school children in Britain are encouraged to take up activities which complement their academic and vocational education and help to identify their individual talents, such as sports, drama, music and creative pursuits. Many of these from part of school curricula.

The personal development and informal social education of young people aged 11-25 is also promoted by the Youth Service in Britain. The Service is a partnership between statutory authorities and a large number of voluntary organisations. A recent survey estimated that nearly 6 million young people in this age group are either current or past participants in the Service.

Youth clubs and centres are the most common types of Youth Service provision, encouraging their members to participate in sport, cultural and creative activities, and community service. Some also provide information and counselling. Youth clubs may be branches of national or international bodies or they may be entirely local institutions.

There are many religious groups and churches with specialist youth organisations, as well as uniformed organisations such as the Guides and Scouts Associations and Boys' and Girls' Brigades.

Finance is provided by many foundations and trusts for activities which develop the latent talents of Britain's young people. The Prince's Trust and the Royal Jubilee Trust, for example, help individuals and organisations active in youth-oriented projects related to urban deprivation, unemployment, homelessness and young offending. The Duke of Edinburgh's Awards Scheme challenges young people to achieve certain standards in community service, expeditions, social and practical skills and physical recreation.

*Age and Sex Structure*

The total population has remained relatively stable over the last decade. The proportion of young people aged under 16 fell steadily in the early 1980s, but numbers in this age group have increased slightly in the last two decades. The proportion of elderly people, especially those aged 85 and over, has continued to increase. The age distribution of the British population in mid-1990 was estimated as follows:

* 20.2 per cent under 16 years of age;
* 64.1 per cent between 16 and 64 years; and
* 15.7 per cent aged 65 and over.

Some 18 per cent of the population were over the normal retirement ages (65 for men and 60 for women) compared with 15 per cent in 1961.

There is ratio of about 105 females to every 100 males. There are about 5 per cent more male than female births every year. Because of the higher mortality of men at all ages, however, there is a turning point, at about 50 years of age, beyond which the number of women exceeds the number of men. This imbalance increases with age so that there are many more women among the elderly.

*Distribution of Population*

The density of population in Britain is well above the European Community average of about 145 per sq km. Since the nineteenth century there has been a trend, especially in London, for people to move away from congested urban centres into the suburbs. There has also been a geographical redistribution of the population from Scotland and the northern regions of England to the South East, East Anglia, the South West and the East Midlands in recent decades. An increase in the rate of retirement migration has also occurred, the main recipient areas, where in some towns the retired constitute over one-quarter of the population, being the south coast of England and East Anglia.

*Women*

The economic and domestic lives of women have been transformed in the twentieth century. These changes are due partly to the removal of much of sex discrimination in political and legal rights. At the heart of women's changed role has been the rise in the number of women, especially married women, at work. With later marriages and the availability of effective contraception there has been a decline in family size. Women are involved in childbearing for a shorter time and this, together with technological advances which have made housework less onerous and time-consuming, has made it easier for women with children to combine child-rearing with paid employment. The growth of part-time and flexible working patterns, and training schemes, allows more women to take advantage of employment opportunities.

Women make up more than two-fifths of the workforce. The proportion of married women working outside the home has increased to two-thirds of those between the ages of 16 and 59, a quarter of the total labour force compared with only 4 per cent in 1921. Married women are most likely to be in full-time work if they are aged 16 to 29 with no children. Over two-fifths of all women in employment work part-time, representing almost

nine-tenths of all part-time workers. By the mid-1990s the numbers of young people entering the labour market has declined substantially and it the resulting shortfall in the labour force is met to a considerable extent by the recruitment of more married women.

There is still a significant difference between men's and women's earnings, but equal pay legislation which came into force in 1975 has helped to narrow the gap; in 1990 women's average hourly earnings were only 77 per cent of men's, despite a progressive rise in women's hourly rates over the last three years. Women's wages remain relatively low because they tend to work in the lower-paid sector of the economy and work fewer hours than men because of their domestic commitments. A major reform in the taxation of women came into effect in 1990, when their earnings began to be taxed separately rather than being treated as part of their husbands' income for tax purposes.

*Equal Opportunities*

The Sex Discriminations Acts 1975 and 1986 make discrimination, in certain circumstances, between men and women unlawful in employment, education, training and the provision of housing, goods, facilities and services. Discriminatory job recruitment advertisements are also unlawful. Complaints of discrimination in employment are dealt with by industrial tribunals; other complaints are taken before county courts in England and Wales or the Sheriff Court in Scotland. Under the Equal Pay Act 1970, as amended in 1984, women in Great Britain are entitled to equal pay with men when doing work that is the same or broadly similar, or work which is of equal value. Parallel legislation on sex discrimination and equal pay is in operation in Northern Ireland.

The Equal Opportunities Commission, set up in 1975 (1976 in Northern Ireland under separate laws), has powers to enforce the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts. Its statutory duties are to work towards eliminating sex discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity. The Commission advises people of their rights under the Acts and may give financial or other assistance to help individuals conduct a case before a court or tribunal. It is empowered to carry out investigations and issue notices requiring discriminatory practices to stop. The Commission also keeps legislation under review and submits proposals for amending it to the Government.

**Social Class.** Historians say that the class system has survived in Britain because of its flexibility. It has always been possible to buy or marry or even work your way up, so that your children (and their children) belong to a higher social class than you do. As a result, the class system has never been swept away by a revolution and an awareness of class forms a major part of most people's sense of identity. People in modem Britain are very conscious of class differences. They regard it as difficult to become friends with somebody from a different class. This feeling has little to do with conscious loyalty, and nothing to do with a positive belief in the class system itself. Most people say they do not approve of class divisions. Nor does it have very much to do with political or religious affiliations. It results from the fact that the different classes have different sets of attitudes and daily habits. Typically, they tend to eat different food at different times of day, they like to talk about different topics using different styles and accents of English, they enjoy different pastimes and sports , they have different values about what things in life are most important and different ideas about the correct way to behave. Stereotypically, they go to different kinds of school. An interesting feature of the class structure in Britain is that it is not just, or even mainly, relative wealth or the appearance of it which determines someone's class. Of course, wealth is part of it - if you become wealthy, you can provide the conditions to enable your children to belong to a higher class that you do. But it is not always possible to guess reliably the class to which a person belongs by looking at his or her clothes, car or bank balance. The most obvious and immediate sign comes when a person opens his or her mouth, giving the listener clues to the speaker's attitudes and interests, both of which are indicative of class. But even more indicative that what the speaker says is the way that he or she says it. The English grammar and vocabulary which is used in public speaking, radio and television news broadcasts, books and newspapers (and also - unless the lessons are run by Americans - as a model for learners of English as a foreign language) is known as 'standard British English'. Most working-class people, however, use lost of words and grammatical forms in their everyday speech which are regarded as 'non-standard'. Nevertheless, nearly everybody in the country is capable of using standard English (or something very close to it) when they judge that the situation demands it. They are taught to do so at school. Therefore, the clearest indication of a person's class is often his or her accent. Most people cannot change this convincingly to suit the situation. The most prestigious accent in Britain is known as 'Received Pronunciation' (RP). It is the combination of standard English spoken with an RP accent that is usually meant when people talk about 'BBC English' or 'Oxford English' (referring to the university, not the town) or 'the Queen's English'. RP is not associated with any particular part of the country. The vast majority of people, however, speak with an accent which is geographically limited. In England and Wales, anyone who speaks with a strong regional accent is automatically assumed to be working class. Conversely, anyone with an RP accent is assumed to be upper or upper-middle class. (In Scotland and Northern Ireland, the situation is slightly different; in these places, some forms of regional accept are almost as prestigious as RP). During the last quarter of the twentieth century, the way that people wish to identify themselves seems to have changed. In Britain, as anywhere else where there are recognized social classes, a certain amount of 'social climbing' goes on; that is, people try to appear as if they belong to as high a class as possible. These days, however, nobody wants to be thought of as snobbish. The word 'posh' illustrated this tendency. It is used by people from all classes to mean 'of a class higher than the one I (the speaker) belong to' and it is normally used with negative connotations. To accuse someone of being posh is to accuse them of being pretentious. Working-class people in particular are traditionally proud of their class membership and would not usually wish to be thought of as belonging to any other class. Interestingly, a survey conducted in the early 1990s showed that the proportion of people who describe themselves as working class is actually greater than the proportion whom sociologists would classify as such! This is one manifestation of a phenomenon known as 'inverted snobbery', whereby middle-class people try to adopt working-class values and habits. They do this in the belief that the working classes are in some way 'better' (for example, more honest) than the middle classes. In this egalitarian climate, the unofficial segregation of the classes in Britain has become less rigid that it was. A person whose accent shows that he or she is working class is no longer prohibited from most high-status jobs for that reason alone. Nobody takes elocution lessons any more in order to sound more upper class. It is now acceptable for radio and television presenters to speak with 'an accent' (i.e. not to use strict RP). It is also notable that, at the time of writing, none of the last five British Prime Ministers went to an elitist school for upper-class children, while almost every previous Prime Minister in history did. In general, the different classes mix more readily and easily with each other than they used to. There has been a great increase in the number of people from working-class origins who are house owners and who do traditionally middle-class jobs. The lower and middle classes have drawn closer to each other in their attitudes.

2.3 Ethnic and National Minorities

For centuries people from overseas have settled in Britain, to escape political or religious persecution or in search of better economic opportunities.

The Irish have long formed a large section of the population. Jewish refugees who came to Britain towards the end of the nineteenth century and in the 1930s were followed by other European refugees after 1945. Substantial immigration from the Caribbean and the South Asia subcontinent dates principally from the 1950s and 1960s. There are also groups from the United States and Canada, as well as Australians, Chinese, Greek and Turkish Cypriots, Italians and Spaniards. More recently people from Latin America, Indo-China and Sri Lanka have sought refuge in Britain.

In 1989-91, according to the results of a sample survey, the average ethnic minority population of Great Britain numbered about 2.7 million (some 4.9 per cent of the total population), of whom 46 per cent were bom in Britain. Just over half of the ethnic minority population was of Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin; less than one-fifth was of Afro-Caribbean ethnic origin; and over one in ten was of mixed ethnic origin.

The sample survey also indicated that the proportion of men of working age in Great Britain who were economically active

was higher among the white population (89 per cent) than among those from other ethnic groups (84 per cent of Afro-Caribbeans and Indians and 75 per cent of those of Pakistani/Bangladeshi origin). Among women the variation was greater: 76 per cent of those from the Afro-Caribbean ethnic group were economically active, compared with 72 per cent in the white group, 60 per cent in the Indian group and only 25 per cent in the Pakistani/Bangladeshi group.

*Alleviating Racial Disadvantage*

Although many members of the black and Asian communities are concentrated in the inner cities, where there are problems of deprivation and social stress, progress has been made over the last 20 years in tackling racial disadvantage in Britain.

Many individuals have achieved distinction in their careers and in public life and the proportion of ethnic minority members occupying professional and managerial positions is increasing. In law, for example, an estimated 6 per cent of practising barristers are of ethnic minority origin. In April 1992 there were six ethnic minority Members of Parliament, and the number of ethnic minority councillors in local government is growing. There has also been an expansion enterprise, and numerous self-help projects in ethnic minority communities have been established. Black competitors have represented Britain in a range of sporting activities, and ethnic minority talents in the arts and in entertainment have increasingly been recognised.

The principal means of combating disadvantage is through the economic, environmental, educational and health programmes of central government and local authorities. There are also special allocations, mainly through Home Office grants and the Urban Programme, which channel extra resources into projects of specific benefit to ethnic minorities. These include, for example, the provision of specialist teachers for children needing English language tuition, business support services and measures to revive local economies and improve the inner city environment. Cultural and recreational schemes and the health and personal social services also take account of the particular needs of ethnic minorities.

The Government is encouraging the development of black businesses in inner city areas through the Ethnic Minority Business Initiative. It is also promoting equal opportunities for ethnic minorities through training, including greater provision for unemployed people who need training in English as a second language.

*Ethnic Minorities and the Police*

In recognition of the tensions that can arise between the police and ethnic minorities, there is statutory consultation between the police and the community. In addition, liaison work is undertaken in schools.

Police training in race relations has received particular attention. A specialist unit, launched in 1989 and run by an independent company, provides police forces with practical help and support in community and race relations training.

Campaigns are run by the police to encourage the recruitment of officers from the ethnic minority communities. Racially discriminatory behaviour by officers has been made an offence under the police discipline code. All police force are aware of the need to respond to reports of racially motivated crime as a priority.

*Race Relations Act 1976*

Equal opportunities policies are backed up by legislation against racial discrimination. The Race Relations Act 1976, which strengthened previous legislation passed in the 1960s, makes discrimination unlawful on groups of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin in the provision of goods, facilities and services, in employment, in housing and in advertising. The 1976

Act also gave complainants direct access to civil courts and, in the case of employment complaints, to industrial tribunals.

It is a criminal offence to incite racial hatred under the provisions of the Public Order Act 1986.

*Commission for Racial Equality*

The Commission for Racial Equality was established by the 1976 Act. It has power to investigate unlawful discriminatory practices and to issue non-discrimination notices, requiring such practices to cease. It has an important educational role and has issued codes of practice in employment, education, health care and housing. It also provides the main advice to the general public about the Race Relations Act and has discretion to assist individuals with their complaints about racial discrimination. In 1991 the Commission registered 1,655 applications for assistance and successfully handled 137 cases. It can also undertake or fund research.

The Commission supports the work of over 80 race equality councils, which are autonomous voluntary bodies set up in most areas with a significant ethnic minority population to promote equality of opportunity and good relations at the local level. It helps pay the salaries of the race equality officers employed by the council, most of whom also receive funds from their local government authorities, and gives grants to ethnic minority self-help groups and to other projects run by or for the benefit of their communities.

1.4 Living standards

Marked improvements in the standard of living for people in Britain have taken place during the 20th century. According to the United Nations, in 1997 Britain ranked fifteenth out of 175 countries on a human development index that combines life expectancy, education levels and basic purchasing power.

Earnings from employment remain the main source of household income for most people, although other sources such as private pensions and annuities have become more important. Disposable income - the amount of money people have available to spend after income tax, National Insurance and contributions to pension schemes have been deducted - is now at its highest-ever level. Since the 1970s there has been little change in the distribution of marketable wealth, half of which is owned by the richest 10 per cent of people. A large proportion of personal wealth in Britain is in residential property. There has also been growth in share ownership in recent years.

Average weekly household spending in Britain is about £311. Food and housing costs constitute 18 and 16 per cent of this. Transport and leisure pursuits account for about 16 per cent each.

*Housing*

Largely depending on their means, people in Britain live in a diverse range of accommodation ranging from country mansions to single rooms or hostels in the inner cities. The majority, however, live in houses and (to a lesser extent) flats, either as owner-occupiers or as tenants paying rent. About 19 per cent of houses are detached, 31 per cent are semi-detached and 29 per cent are terraced. Purpose-built flats or maisonettes make up 15 per cent of the housing stock and converted flats or rooms account for 5 per cent.

Owner-occupation more than doubled between 1961 and 1997. The number of owner-occupied homes amounts to over 14 million in England. Most people buy their homes with a mortgage loan, with the property as security. Mortgages are available from building societies, banks and other financial institutions.

There are some 3.6 million houses and flats in the public housing sector. Most of the public housing in Great Britain is provided by local housing authorities. Over one-third of local authority tenants live in purpose-built flats or maisonettes,

one-third in terraced houses and about one-quarter in semi-detached houses. Most have the right to buy the homes they occupy if they wish.

Housing associations, which are non-profit-making, are now the main providers of additional low-cost housing for rent and for sale to those on low incomes and in the greatest housing need. The housing association sector is expanding rapidly; associations now own, manage and maintain over 950,000 homes and about 65,000 hostel and special needs bed-spaces in Great Britain, providing homes for well over a million people.

Almost 10 per cent of households are rented from private landlords.

*Leisure trends*

The most common leisure activities among people in Britain are home-based, or social, such as visiting relatives or friends.

Watching television is by far the most popular leisure pastime. Nearly every household has a television set, and average viewing time is over 25 hours a week. The majority of households also have a video recorder.

Other regular pastimes include listening to the radio and to recorder music. About 70 per cent of the population listen to local and national radio on an average day. There has been a dramatic rise in the sale of compact discs in recent years. The number of households with a home computer has increased to over one-quarter.

Many people in their spare time enjoy reading (over 50 per cent belong to a library), gardening, do-it-yourself home improvements, undertaking voluntary work, going out for a meal or drink or to the cinema. More daily newspapers, national and regional, are sold for every person in Britain than in most other developed countries. On an average day 56 per cent of people over the age of 15 read a national morning paper; 70 per cent read a Sunday newspaper.

The British are renowned as animal lovers, and about half of all household have a pet, most commonly dogs and cats.

*Holidays*

In 1997,57 million holidays of four or more nights away from home were taken by British residents, 30 million of them within Britain. The most popular destinations for summer holidays in Britain are the West Country, Scotland and Wales. August is the most popular month for taking holidays.

Of the major free seaside attractions, the most frequented were Blackpool Pleasure Beach in Lancashire (with an estimated 7.8 million visitors), the Place Pier in Brighton and the Pleasure Beach at Great Yarmouth.

The most popular destinations for overseas holidays by British residents are France (23 per cent), Spain (26 per cent) and the United States (6.7 per cent). In all, British residents take about 29 million holidays overseas, of which 57 per cent involve 'package' arrangements (covering both transport and accommodation). About 80 per cent of all holidays abroad are taken in Europe.

*Eating and drinking habits*

Although some traditional meals in Britain, like roast beef and Yorkshire pudding or fish and chips, remain popular, there has been a significant shift in eating habits among the population over the last decade or so. This is in part due to a greater emphasis on health and convenience considerations.

Consumption of several items, such as packet sugar, eggs, potatoes and fresh green vegetables, has declined substantially. An increase in the consumption of rice and pasta may be partly responsible for the decline in that of potatoes. Consumption of meat - with the exception of that of poultry which is now at a record level - has also fallen. Skimmed milk now constitutes more than half of the total household consumption of liquid milk. There

has been a decline in the total consumption of cooking and spreading fats, with large falls in butter and lard usage being offset by rapid rises in the consumption of vegetable and salad oils and reduced fat spreads. A switch in fish consumption away from fresh white fish towards canned fish and shellfish has been evident. There has been a small increase in the intake of fibre.

Britain has a wide range of restaurants, offering cuisine from virtually every country. Chinese, Indian, Italian and Greek restaurants are among the most popular.

There has been an increase in recent years in the amount of alcohol that people drink, particularly among women. Beer, including lager, is the most popular drink among male drinkers. The largest consumers of alcohol are in the 18 to 24 age range. Table wine has become more popular, although there has been little change in the consumption of stronger wines such as sherry and port.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What languages are spoken in Britain?

Which of the languages of Celtic origin is the strongest?

1. What is the demographic situations in Britain today?

What are the statistics for birth rates, life expectancy, age and sex structure? What are the latest trends in family life?

1. What is the population of Britain and its major cities? Which are Britain’s largest ethnic minority groups? What is the evidence for discrimination against ethnic minorities in employment, the armed services, housing, education, etc.?
2. In what ways are women still disadvantaged in Britain? How does the position of women in Britain compare with that in Belarus?
3. How do you explain the popularity of the different types of dwelling in Britain?
4. What are the typical leisure trends?

3. BRITISH POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

3.1 Constitutional framework

3.1 The Monarchy and The Privy Council

3.3 Parliament, Parliamentary Procedure, Legislative Proceedings, General Elections, The Party Political System

3.4 The Government. The Civil Service

**3.1 Constitutional framework** . The history of British politics over the past 800 years has been largely one of breaking down the monarch's former power, and vesting that authority in Parliament as the sovereign legal voice of the people. This struggle has produced bitter conflicts on governmental, social and religious levels, as well as slowly evolving political institutions. The original structures were inevitably monarchical, aristocratic and non-democratic. These have been gradually adapted to the requirements of parliamentary democracy, changing social conditions and the mass franchise of today.

However, the roles of the political institutions are still vigorously debated in contemporary Britain. Governments are frequently accused of being too secretive, too centralized, too party-political, and insufficiently responsive to the wider needs of the country. It is also argued that Parliament has lost its controlling and restraining influence over the Cabinet-led executive. It is felt that political power has shifted overwhelmingly to the sitting government, and to the Prime Minister within the Cabinet. This view suggests that the real

authority in the British governmental and political system now rests with the Prime Minister, as it had once belonged predominantly to the monarch.

*Political history*

Between 1066 and 1199 English monarchs had great power, but generally accepted advice and some limitations on their authority. However later kings, such as King John, often ignored these restrictions and the French-Norman barons eventually united against his dictatorial rule. They forced him to sign Magna Carta in 1215. Although this document was initially intended to protect the aristocracy and not the ordinary citizen, it came in time to be regarded as a cornerstone of British liberties, and is one of the oldest written constitutional papers. Among other things, it restricted the monarch's powers; forced him to take advice; promoted an aristocratic influence in national affairs; and stipulated that no citizen could be punished or kept in prison without a fair trial. Later monarchs tried to ignore Magna Carta, but could not succeed initially against the military strength of the barons.

These developments encouraged the establishment of basic parliamentary structures against royal power. In 1265 Simon de Montfort called England's first parliament, which was composed of nobles and minor aristocrats. This was followed in 1295 by the Model Parliament, which was to serve as an example for future structures. Its two sections consisted of the Lords and Bishops, who were chosen by the monarch, and the Commons, which comprised elected male representatives. These two units gradually moved further apart over time, and eventually evolved into the present parliamentary division between the House of Lords and the House of Commons. However, in the thirteenth century, the combined Parliament of aristocrats and commoners was too large to rule the country effectively. A Privy Council was subsequently created, which was an expansion of the traditional small circle of advisers at the royal court. In succeeding centuries, this body was to become the dominant royal government outside Parliament, until it also gave way to the present structures in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Although these early development did give Parliament some limited powers against the monarch, there was a return to royal dominance in Tudor England from 1485. The nobility had been weakened by wars and internal conflicts, and the Tudor monarchs deliberately chose minor aristocratic landed gentry as members of their Privy Councils. The nobility were often excluded from policy-making, and the gentry inevitably became dependent upon royal patronage. Consequently, Tudor monarchs controlled Parliament and summoned it only when they needed to raise money.

Parliament began to show more resistance to the monarchy under the Stuart succession from 1603 by using its gradually acquired weapon of financial control. It was influenced by the gentry, who had now become more independent of royal patronage, had expanded economically in the country, and had a majority in the House of Commons. Parliament began to refuse royal requests for money. It eventually forced Charles I to sign the Petition of Rights in 1628, which further restricted the monarch's powers and was intended to prevent him from raising taxes without Parliament's consent. Charles tried to ignore these political developments, until he was obliged to summon Parliament for finance. Parliament again refused the request.

Realising that he could not control Parliament, Charles next failed in his attempt to arrest Parliamentary leaders in the House of Commons itself. Because of this episode, the monarch was in future prohibited from entering the Commons. Today Black Rod, who is a royal ceremonial appointment, is a reminder of these constitutional changes. He knocks on the door of the Commons after it has been closed against him, in order to summon members of the Commons to the State Opening of Parliament. This is

normally performed each autumn by the monarch in the House of Lords.

Charles's rejection of developing political ideals provoked anger against the Crown, and eventually a Civil War broke out in 1642. The mainly Protestant Parliamentarians under Oliver Cromwell won the military struggle against the largely Catholic Royalists. Charles I was beheaded in 1649, the monarchy was abolished, and England was made a republic under the Cromwells (1649-59). During this republican period, Parliament consisted only of the House of Commons, which met every three years.

However, Cromwellian military rule was harsh and increasingly unpopular, so that most people wanted the restoration of the monarchy. The two Houses of Parliament were re-established, and in 1660 they restored the Stuart Charles II to the throne. Initially Charles co-operated with Parliament, but eventually his financial needs, his belief in the divine right of kings to rule without opposition, and his support of the Catholic cause lost him popular and parliamentary backing. Parliament then ended his expensive wars; forced him to sign the Test Act of 1673, which excluded Catholics and Protestant dissenters from holding public office; and passed the Habeas Corpus Act in 1769, which stipulated that no citizen could be imprisoned without a fair and speedy trial.

In addition to this growing power of Parliament against the monarch, the seventeenth century also saw the beginning of more organized political parties. These derived largely from the ideological and religious conflicts of the Civil War. Two groups became dominant, and this feature was to characterize future British two-party politics, in which political power has shifted between two main parties. The Whigs were mainly Cromwellian Protestants and gentry, who refused to accept the Catholic James II as successor to Charles II, and who wanted religious freedom for all Protestants. The Tries generally supported royalist beliefs, and helped Charles II to secure James's right to succeed him.

But James's subsequent behaviour resulted in a further reduction of royal influence. He attempted to rule without Parliament, ignored its laws, and tried to repeal the Test Act. His manipulations eventually forced the Tories to join the Whigs in inviting the Protestant William of Orange to intervene. Supported by Dutch military help, William arrived in England in 1688, James fled to France, and William succeeded to the throne. Since no force was involved, this event has been called the Bloodless or Glorious Revolution. The 1688 changes considerably affected the British constitution and politics. William III became Britain's first constitutional monarch and, because of conditions imposed upon him, it was in future practically impossible for the monarch to reign without the consent of Parliament.

A series of Acts at this time laid the foundations for later political and constitutional developments. The Declaration of Rights in 1689 tried to establish basic civil liberties, and prevented the monarch from making laws or raising an army without Parliament's approval. The Act of Settlement in 1701 gave religious freedom to all Protestants, and stipulated that all future English monarchs had to be Protestant. A Triennial Act established that Parliament was to be called every three years.

The Glorious Revolution effectively abolished the monarch's claim to divine right. It also attempted to arrange a division of powers between an executive branch (the monarch through the government of the Privy Council); a legislative branch (both Houses of Parliament and formally the monarch); and the judiciary (a legal body independent of monarch and Parliament). This division, in which the legislature was supposed to control the executive, evolved slowly into its modem counterparts.

Parliamentary power continued to grow gradually in the early eighteenth century, initially because the German-born George I lacked interest in English affairs of state. He also mistrusted the Tories with their Catholic sympathies, and appointed Whig ministers such as Robert Walpole to his Privy Council. Eventually Walpole became Chief Minister, Leader of the Whig Party and head of the Whig majority in the House of Commons, which was now mainly composed of wealthy land and property owners. Walpole's resulting control of political power enabled him to increase parliamentary influence, and he has been called Britain's first Prime Minister. But such parliamentary authority was by no means absolute, and later monarchs sought a return to royal dominance. However, George III eventually lost much of his own and royal authority after the loss of the American colonies with their Revolution against Britain in 1775. He was obliged to appoint William Pitt the Younger as his Tory Chief Minister, and it was under Pitt that the office of Prime Minister really developed.

But although parliamentary control continued to grow in the late eighteenth and early\_nineteenth centuries, there was still no widespread democracy in Britain. Political authority was now in the hands of landowners and merchants in Parliament, and the vast majority of the people did not possess the vote. Bribery and corruption were common in this political atmosphere, with the buying of those votes which did exist and the giving away or sale of public offices. The Tories were against electoral reform, as were the Whigs initially. But the country was now rapidly increasing its population and developing industrially and econo­mically, so that pressures for political reform became irresistible. The Whigs extended voting rights to the expanding middle class in the First Reform Act of 1832. The Tory Disraeli later gave the vote to men with property and a certain income. However, the large majority of the working class were still unrepresented in Parliament because they had no votes. It was only in 1884 that the Whig Gladstone gave the franchise to all male adults. But most women had to wait until 1928 for full voting rights to be established in Britain.

The main elements of modem British government developed somewhat haphazardly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and were based on the 1688 revolution and its division of powers. Government ministers gradually became responsible to the House of Commons rather than to the monarch, and were mainly members of the Commons. A growing collective responsibility meant that they all shared joint responsibility for the policies and acts of government, in addition to their individual responsibility owed to Parliament for the organization of their ministries. The prime ministership developed from the monarch's Chief Minister to 'first among equals' and eventually to the leadership of all ministers. The central force of government was now the parliamentary Cabinet of senior ministers, which had grown out of the Privy Council and the monarch's Cabinet. The ministers and the government belonged to the majority party in the House of Commons. The largest minority party became the Official Opposition, striving by its party manifesto and its performance in the Commons and the country to become the next government chosen by the people.

Such constitutional developments were aided by the growth of more sophisticated and organized political parties, in the nine­teenth century, which were conditioned by changing social and economic factors. These produced the modem struggle between opposing ideologies as represented by the various political parties. The Tories, who also became known as the Conservatives I around 1830, had been a dominant force in British politics since the eighteenth century. They believed in established values and the preservation of traditions; supported business and commerce; had strong links with the Church of England and the professions; and were opposed to what they saw as radical ideas. The Whigs, however, were developing into a more progressive force. They wanted social reform and economic freedom without government restrictions. In the period following the parliamentary reforms of 1832, the Whigs were changing into what later became the Liberal Party. They were to create an enlightened programme of liberalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Liberal Party was a mixture of people and ideas, often held together by the principle of utilitarian reform (or the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people).

But a significant feature of the early inter-war years after 1918 was the decline of the Liberal Party, from which it was unable to recover. The new Labour Party, formed in 1906, gradually became the main opposition party to the Conservatives, and continued the traditional two-party system in British politics. It grew rapidly and was supported by the trade unions, the majority of the working class, and some middle-class voters. The first Labour government was formed in 1924 under Ramsay MacDonald, but only achieved real majority power in 1945 under Clement Attlee. It then embarked on a radical programme of social and economic reforms, which were to lay the foundations of the modem corporate and welfare state.

Meanwhile, in this lengthy period of changing political fortunes and the triumph of the House of Commons in the parliamentary system, gradual reforms had been made to the House of Lords. The Parliament Acts of 1911 and 1949, eventually removed much of the Lords' political authority, leaving them with only a slight delaying and amending power over parliamentary bills. They could no longer interfere with financial legislation. These reforms finally demonstrated that political and taxation matters were now decided by the members of the Commons as elected representatives of the people. Other subsequent Acts have allowed the creation of non-hereditary titles, which supplement the old arrangement in which most peerages were hereditary.

*The constitutional framework*

There have been no revolutionary upheavals in the British system of government over the centuries, despite the Civil War and the 1688 changes. Rather, existing institutions have been pragmatically adapted to new conditions. There has likewise been no deliberate attempt to establish a rigidly defined constitution, so that Britain, unlike many other countries, has no written constitution contained in any one document. Instead, the British employ a mixture of statute law (Acts of Parliament); common law (ancient judge-made law); and conventions (or principles and practices of government which, although not legally binding, are generally accepted as having the force of law).

Since Parliament is for most purposes still the supreme legislative authority, save for some European Community legislation law and institutions can be created or changed by a simple Act of Parliament relatively quickly. The common law can be extended by the judges in the legal process, and conventions can be altered, formed or abolished by general agreement. Once a problem has been solved satisfactorily in the British system, that solution tends to be used again in similar situations, and becomes a precedent to govern future actions. Precedents are vital devices in the operation of Parliament, the administrative bodies and the courts of law. These elements, which together with some ancient documents make up the British constitutional framework, arc said to be flexible and simple enough to respond quickly to new conditions should that be necessary.

This somewhat haphazard constitutional system, which is largely dependent upon conventions and observing the rules of the game, has been admired in the past. The arrangements were said to combine stability and adaptability, so that a successful balance of authority and toleration was achieved. Most British governments tended govern pragmatically when in power, inspite of very ideological party manifestos at election time. The emphasis was on whether a particular policy worked and was generally acceptable. Governments were conscious of how far they could go before displeasing their own followers and the electorate, to whom they were accountable at the next general election.

But the system has been increasingly criticized in recent years. Governments have become more radical in their policies, and have been able to implement them because of strong majorities in the Commons. There has been concern at the apparent absence of constitutional safeguards for the individual citizen against state power, especially since there are few legal definitions of civil liberties in Britain. There also appear to be few effective parliamentary restraints upon a strong government which is intent upon carrying out its policies.

The lack of adequate constitutional definitions in the British system has been seen as potentially dangerous, particularly when governments and their administrative bodies have a reputation for being too secretive. There have consequently been campaigns for more effective civil protection in the forms of a bill of rights; a written constitution; greater judicial scrutiny of the merits of parliamentary legislation; a Freedom of Information Act; and the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into British domestic law. But none of these suggested reforms has been achieved, and there is considerable opposition to the various proposals.

Some critics argue that the British political system no longer works satisfactorily. They maintain that its institutions are too centralized, and that the traditional bases are no longer adequate for the organization of a complex, mass society. It is felt that political policies have become too conditioned by party politics at the expense of consensus. Questions have consequently been raised about the democratic and representative basis of national programmes. It is argued that there must be a fundamental reform of the existing political institutions if they are to reflect a contemporary diversity. However, changes do continue to be made to the present apparatus, and it may be that the old evolutionary principles will be successfully adapted to new demands and conditions.

The governmental model that operates in Britain today is usually described as a constitutional monarchy, or parliamentary system. While the monarch still has a role to play on some executive and legislative levels, it is Parliament which possesses the essential legislative power, and the government of the day which governs by initiating and controlling political policy and legislation. The correct constitutional definition of Parliament is the 'Queen-in-Parliament', and all state and governmental business is therefore carried out in the name of the monarch by the politicians and officials of the system. In constitutional theory, the British people hold the political sovereignty to choose their government, while Parliament, consisting partly of their elected representatives in the Commons, possesses the legal sovereignty to make laws.

The various branches of this political system, although easily distinguishable from each other, are not entirely separate. The monarch is formally head of the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. A Member of Parliament (MP) in the House of Commons and a member of the House of Lords may both be in the government of the day. A Law Lord in the House of Lords also serves the House of Lords as the highest appeal court.

The legislature, which consists of both Houses of Parliament and formally the monarch, is for most purposes the supreme law-making body. The executive comprises the sitting government and its Cabinet, together with government ministries or departments headed by ministers or secretaries of state, who all act formally in the name of the monarch. The judiciary is composed mainly of the judges of the higher courts, who determine the common law and interpret Acts of Parliament. The judiciary is supposed to be independent of the legislative and executive branches of government.

**3.1 The Monarchy and the Privy Council**

The continuity of the English monarchy has been interrupted only by the Cromwell republic of 1649-59 although there have been different lines of descent, such as the Stuarts, the Tudors and the Hanoverians. The Crown, as distinct from any particular monarch, is thus one of the oldest secular institutions in Britain. Succession to the throne is still hereditary, but only for Protestants in the direct line of descent.

The monarch has a number of roles, and serves formally as head of state head of the executive head of the judiciary head of the legislature commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and supreme governor of the Church of England. It follows that all ministers and officials of the central government are the monarch's servants, and judges, military officers, peers, and bishops of the Church of England swear allegiance to the Crown. In holding these and other positions, the monarch is said to personify the British state.

In spite of these roles, there are difficulties in defining the precise powers of the monarch, who is supposed to reign but not rule. The monarch is also expected to be politically neutral, and should not be seen to be making political decisions. In order to avoid potential constitutional crises, proposals have often been made that rules concerning the real powers of the monarch should be established. Ideally they would clarify the uncertain elements in the monarch's position, and avoid the dangers of involving the Crown in political controversy.

However, for all practical purposes and since the old executive royal authority has been virtually abolished, the monarch acts only on the advice of political ministers, which cannot be ignored. The monarch cannot make laws, impose taxes, spend public money or act unilaterally. In this sense, contemporary Britain is governed by Her Majesty's Government in the name of the Queen.

Nevertheless, the monarch still performs some important executive and legislative duties, which are essential to the smooth running of government. These include the summoning, opening, Proroguing (or adjourning), and dissolving of Parliament; giving the Royal Assent (or signature) to bills which have been passed by both Houses of Parliament; appointing government ministers and other public figures; granting honours; holding audiences with the Prime Ministers; convening meetings of the Privy Council; giving pardons to some convicted criminals; and fulfilling international duties as head of state. In practice, most of these functions are performed by the monarch on the advice of the Prime Minister or other ministers.

But central power still possessed by the monarch is the choice and appointment of the Prime Minister. Normally and by convention, this person would be the leader of the political party which has a majority in the House of Commons. However, if there is no clear majority or if the political situation is unclear, the monarch could in theory make a free choice. In practice, it appears that advice would be given by the monarch's advisers and leading politicians in order to present a suitable candidate who would be generally acceptable.

The constitutional conventions stipulate that the monarch has the right to be informed of and advised on all aspects of national life by receiving government documents and meeting with the Prime Minister. The monarch also has the right to encourage, warn and advise ministers. This latter role could be a source of potential power not only in Britain, but also in the Commonwealth of which the monarch is head. It is difficult to know to what extent monarchical advice on formal and informal levels is influential. Some critics suggest that it could be substantial.

The monarch is a permanent fixture in the British political system, unlike temporary politicians, and often has a greater knowledge of domestic and international politics. It seems that the monarchy still has a considerable part to play in the operation of government at various levels. Its practical and constitutional importance is stressed by provisions for the appointment of counsellors of state (or a regent in exceptional cases) to perform royal duties, should the monarch be absent from Britain or unable to carry out public tasks.

Most of the costs of the royal family's official duties are met from public funds. This finance is granted from the Civil List - money which previously had to be debated and approved by Parliament each year, but which from 1990 has been frozen at current levels for a 10-year period. The monarch's private expenses as sovereign come from the Privy Purse - finance which is gathered from the revenues of some royal estates. Any other costs incurred by the monarch as a private individual must come from the Crown's own resources, which are very considerable.

Arguments against the monarchy as a continuing institution in British life maintain that it is out-of-date, non-democratic, too expensive, too exclusive and too closely associated with aristocratic privilege and establishment thinking. It is argued that the monarchy's alleged aloofness from ordinary daily life contributes to class divisions in society and sustains a hierarchical structure. It is also suggested that, if the monarch's functions today are merely ceremonial and lack power or essential point, the office should be abolished and replaced by a cheaper figurehead presidency.

Arguments in favour of the monarchy suggest that it has developed and adapted to modem requirements, and is not remote. It is argued that it serves as a symbol or personification of the state; demonstrates stability and continuity; has a higher prestige than politicians; is not subject to political manipulations; plays a worthwhile role in political institutions; possesses a neutrality with which people can feel secure; and performs an important ambassadorial function in Britain and overseas. The monarchy is also said to reflect family values, and has a certain glamour (some would say soap-opera quality) about it, which is

attractive to many people. The British public shows considerable affection for the royal family beyond its representative role. Public opinion polls from time to time demonstrate majority support for the institution of monarchy as against a republican alternative. But the polls also suggest that the monarchy should adapt more to changes in society; that less public money should be spent on it; and that its income should be subject to income tax.

*The Privy Council*

The Privy Council developed from a small group of royal advisers at court into the chief source of executive authority. But its powerful position was weakened in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as more of its functions were transferred to a developing parliamentary Cabinet. Its work was later devolved to newly created ministries, which were needed to cope with a rapidly changing society.

Today its main role is to advise the monarch on a range of matters, like the resolution of constitutional issues and the approval of Orders in Council, such as the granting of Royal Charters to public bodies. Its members can be appointed to advisory and problem-solving committees and, because of its international membership and continuing constitutional character, it can be influential.

Cabinet ministers automatically become members on taking government office. Life membership of the council is also given by the monarch, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, to eminent people in Britain and in independent monarchical countries of the Commonwealth. There are about 380 Privy Councillors at present, but the organization tends to work for practical purposes mostly through small groups. A full council is usually only summoned on the death of a monarch; when there are serious constitutional issues at stake; or occasionally when a Commonwealth Heads of State Conference is held in London. In the case of any indisposition of the monarch, counsellors of state or an appointed regent would work partly through the Privy Council.

Apart from its practical duties and its role as a constitutional forum for experienced people, perhaps the most important task of the Privy Council today is performed by its Judicial Committee. This serves as the final court of appeal from those dependencies and Commonwealth countries which have retained this avenue of appeal. It may also be used as an arbiter for a wide range of courts and committees in Britain and overseas, and its rulings can be influential.

**3.3 Parliament, Parliamentary Procedure, Legislative Proceedings, General Elections, The Party Political System**

Parliament is the supreme legislative authority in Britain and, since it is not controlled by a written constitution, it has legal sovereignty in virtually all matters, subject only to some European Community decisions. This means that it can create, abolish or amend laws for all or any part(s) of Britain on any topic. The main functions of Parliament today are to pass laws; to vote on financial bills so that government can carry on its legitimate business; to examine government policies and administration; and to scrutinize European Community legislation.

In pursuing these powers, Parliament is supposed to legislate according to the rule of law, precedent and tradition. Politicians are generally sensitive to these conventions and to public opinion. A set of formal and informal checks and balances - such as party discipline, the Official Opposition, public reaction and pressure groups - normally ensures that Parliament legislates according to its legal responsibilities. A government with a strong majority in the House of Commons may bow to public pressure, face rebellion from its own MPs and suffer attack by the opposition parties if the proposed laws are not widely accepted.

Parliament consists of the House of Lords, the House of Commons and formally the monarch. It assembles as a unified body only on ceremonial occasions, such as the State Opening of Parliament by the monarch in the House of Lords. Here it listens

to the monarch's speech from the throne, which outlines the government's broad legislative programme for the coming session. All three parts of Parliament must normally pass a bill before it can become an Act of Parliament and therefore law. A correctly created Act cannot be challenged in the law courts on its merits.

A Parliament has a maximum duration of five years, but it is often dissolved and a general election called before the end of this term. The maximum has sometimes been prolonged by special parliamentary legislation on occasions of national emergency like the two World Wars. A dissolution of Parliament and the issue of writs for the ensuing general election are ordered by the monarch on the advice of the Prime Minister. If an individual MP dies, resigns or is given a peerage, a by-election is called only for that member's seat, and Parliament as a whole is not dissolved.

The contemporary House of Lords consists of the Lords Temporal and the Lords Spiritual. The Lords Spiritual are the Archbishops of York and Canterbury, together with twenty-four senior diocesan bishops of the Church of England. The Lords Temporal consist of (1) 92 hereditary peers and peeresses; (2) life peers and peeresses, who have usually been created by political parties. There are some 670 members of the House of Lords, but the active daily attendance varies from a handful to a few hundred. Peers receive no salary for their parliamentary work, but are eligible for attendance and travelling expenses should they wish to claim them. The House is presided over by the Lord Chancellor who is a political appointee of the sitting government, who sits on the Woolsack (or stuffed woolen sofa) as Speaker (Chairman) of the House, and who controls the procedure and meetings of the House.

There are frequent demands that the unrepresentative, unelected House of Lords should be abolished and replaced by a second democratically elected chamber. The problem consists of which alternative model to adopt, and there is little agreement on this point. Meanwhile, the House of Lords does its job well as an experienced and less partisan corrective to the House of Commons. It retains an important revising, amending and delaying function. This may be used either to block government legislation for a time, or to persuade governments to have a second look at bills. In this sense, it is a safeguard, against over-hasty legislation by the Commons, and fulfils a considerable constitutional role at times when governments may be very powerful. This function is possible because members of the Lords tend to be more independently minded than MPs in the Commons, and do not suffer such rigid party discipline. Indeed, the House has a considerable number of Independents (or crossbenchers) who do not belong to any political party, although there appears to be a nominal Conservative majority in the total membership.

*Attempts to reform the House of Lords* were made several times in the course of the 20th century.

The Parliament Act of 1911 removed from the House of Lords the power of veto a bill, except one to prolong the lifetime of a parliament. Instead, the Lords could delay a bill by up to two years. The Parliament Act of 1949 further reduced the Lord's delaying powers to one year.

The Labour government came to power in 1997 on a manifesto which stated that the House of Lords must be reformed. As an initial, self-contained reform, the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords will be ended by statute. This will be the first stage in process of reform to make the House of Lords more democratic and representative. The legislative powers

of the House of Lords will remain unaltered.

The House of Lords Bill to remove the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the house was introduced in the 1998-1999 parliamentary session. The amendment allowed that 75 hereditary peers would retain their seats, and be elected by party groups in proportion to their strengths. Responsibility for further reform was given to the Royal Commission on the Reform of House of Lords. The House of Commons consists of Members of Parliament (MPs) who arc elected by the adult suffrage of the British people, and who are said to represent the citizen in Parliament. In practice, this means that a government can be elected with a minority of the popular vote and is able to carry out its policies (the mandate theory) because it has achieved a majority of the seats in the House of Commons. The Commons has 650 MPs, of whom under 10 per cent are women. There are 523 parliamentary seats for England, 38 for Wales, 72 for Scotland and 17 for Northern Ireland.

Traditional constitutional theory has suggested that Parliament is supposed to control the government or the executive. This might have been true to some degree in the past. But the contemporary reality seems to be that a strong government with a reasonable overall majority in the Commons should be able to carry its policies through Parliament. This is irrespective of what Parliament as a collective body can do to oppose it. It is government that governs in Britain today. Unless there is a small-majority government or rebellion by government MPs, Parliament appears unable to affect that rule in any substantial way. The opposition parties can only oppose in Parliament in the hope of persuading the electorate to dismiss the sitting government at the next general election. Some critics would like to see stronger parliamentary control over the executive, which has been described as an elective dictatorship. But, given the existing electoral system and the present organization of Parliament, there seems little chance of this without a fundamental reform of thewhole apparatus.

**The parliamentary electoral system (general elections)**

Britain is divided for electoral purposes into constituencies, or geographical areas of the country, usually containing about 60,000 voters, each of which returns one elected MP to the House of Commons. The constituencies are supposed to be frequently changed in size and location in order to ensure fair representation and to reflect population movements. But such aims are not always successfully achieved.

General elections for parliamentary seats are by secret ballot, but voting is not compulsory. British, Commonwealth and Irish Republic citizens may all vote in the elections provided that they are resident in Britain, registered on the annual register of voters for the constituency, are aged 18 or over, and are not subject to any disqualification. People not entitled to vote include members of the House of Lords; certain mentally ill patients who are detained in hospital or prison; and persons who have been recently convicted of corrupt or illegal election practices.

The turnout of voters averages over 70 per cent at general elections out of a total electorate of some 42 million people. The candidate who wins the most votes in a constituency is elected MP for that area. This system is known as the simple majority or the 'first past the post' system. There is no voting by proportional representation (PR), except for local elections in Northern Ireland.

There has been much debate about the British electoral system. Many see it as unfair to the smaller parties, and campaigns continue for some form of PR, which would create a wider selection of parties in the House of Commons and cater for minority political interests. But the two major parties (Conserva­tive and Labour) have preferred the existing system. It gives them a greater chance of achieving power, and they have not been prepared to legislate for change, although the Labour Party seems now to be more sympathetic to PR. It is argued that the British people have traditionally preferred the stronger and more certain government which can often, if not always, result from the present arrangements. Defenders of the current system point to the assumed weaknesses of coalition or minority government as practised on the continent, such as frequent breakdown, a lack of firm policies and power-bargaining between different parties in order to achieve government status. But weak and small-majoritygovernment can also result from the British system.

**The party political system**

The electoral system depends to a large extent upon the party political system, which has existed since the seventeenth century. Organized political parties present their policies in the form of manifestos to the electorate for consideration during the intensive few weeks of canvassing and campaigning before General Election Day. A party candidate in a constituency is elected to Parliament on a combination of election manifesto, the personality of the candidate and the attraction of the national party. But party activity continues outside the election period itself, as the politicians battle for power and the ears of the electorate.

Since 1945 there have been seven Labour and eight Conservative governments in Britain. Some have had large majorities in the House of Commons, while others have had small ones. Some, like the Labour governments in the 1970s, have had to rely on the support of smaller parties, such as the Liberals and various nationalist parties, in order to remain in power.

The great majority of the MPs in the House of Commons belong to either the Conservative or the Labour Party, which are the largest political parties. This division emphasizes the continuation of the traditional two-party system in British politics, in which power has alternated between two major parties.

*The Labour Party* has traditionally gathered its support from the trade unions, the working class and some middle-class backing. Its electoral strongholds have always been in south Wales, Scotland, and the Midland and northern English industrial cities. But, although the 1997 general election continued to reflect this national division, the previous patterns of support are altering as social and job mobility changes. In recent years the Labour Party has embarked on wide-ranging reviews of its policies in order to broaden its appeal, take account of changing economic and social conditions, and remain a major force in British politics.

*The Conservative Party* has traditionally regarded itself as a

national party, which appeals to people across the class barriers. Although it has often criticized what it sees as the dogmatic and ideological fervour of the Labour Party, the Conservative Party has also become more radical in recent years, and has departed from what used to be considered as the consensus view of British politics. The party's support comes mainly from business interests and the middle and upper classes, but a sizeable percentage of skilled and unskilled workers, and women have always voted Conservative. The party's strongholds tend to be in southern England, with scattered support elsewhere in the country, although it has suffered serious setbacks in Scotland.

Smaller political parties also have some representation in the House of Commons. Among these have been the Liberals and Social Democrats; the Scottish National Party; Plaid Cymru (the Welsh National Party); the Protestant Northern Irish parties of the Official Unionists, the Democratic Unionists and the Ulster Popular Unionists; the Social Democratic and Labour Party (moderate Roman Catholic Northern Irish party); and Sinn Fein (Republican Northern Irish party). Other small parties such as the Greens and Communist Party, as well as publicity-seeking fringe groups, may also contest a general election. But a party which does not achieve a certain number of votes in the election loses its deposit - the sum paid when a party registers to fight an election.

An innovation in British party politics is the emergence of the Alliance as an electoral force. This was formed by the co-operation for electoral purposes of the Liberals and the Social Democratic Party (SDP), which was founded in 1981 by defectors from the Labour Party. The Alliance gained substantial support in public opinion polls, won some dramatic by-elections, and achieved considerable success in local government elections. But it did not make a comparable breakthrough into national politics and the House of Commons. The Liberals and the SDP saw themselves in this period as an alternative political force to the Conservative and Labour Parties, based on the centre or centre-left of British politics. They tried to 'break the mould' of the traditional two-party system, but their performance in the 1987 general election did not achieve this aim. In 1988 a majority of the two parties merged into one party called the Social and Liberal Democratic Party (or SLD or Liberal Democrats for short). But small groups of Liberals and SDP members continued as separate parties, until the SDP ceased to exist as a political party in 1990. At present, the support for the Liberal Democratshas sunk to some 16 per cent, and it seems that the centre ground in British politics has been largely recaptured by the Labour and Conservative Parties. However, the SLD and other smaller parties do allow alternative political parties to be represented in the House of Commons.

The party which wins most parliamentary seats at a general election, or which has the support of a majority of MPs in the House of Commons, usually forms the new government. Under the British system, that government need not have obtained an overall majority of the popular vote (representing the actual number of votes cast by the voting population). It is estimated that a party will generally have to gather more than 33 per cent of the popular vote before winning a substantial number of seats, and nearly 40 per cent in order to expand that representation and have a chance of forming a government with an overall majority. These figures will also depend upon whether support is concentrated in particular geographical areas, for a party may gain seats by its local strength. Smaller parties, which do not approach these percentages, will not gain many seats in the Commons. It is this system of representation that proponents of would like to change, in order to reflect more accurately the Popular vote and the anneal of minority parties.

Once the results of a general election are known, the majority party in the Commons normally forms the new government, and the largest minority party becomes the official opposition. The opposition has its own leader and 'shadow government'. It plays an important constitutional role in the parliamentary system, which is based on adversarial and confrontational politics. The seating arrangements in the House of Commons reflect this system, since leaders of the government and opposition parties sit on facing 'front benches', with their supporting MPs, or 'backbenchers', sitting behind them. The effectiveness of parliamentary arrangements is supposed to rest on the relationship between the government and opposition parties, in which the members are required to observe procedural conventions.

The opposition parties may try to overthrow the government by defeating it on a 'vote of no confidence' or a 'vote of censure'. In general these techniques are not successful if the government has a comfortable majority and can count on the support of its MPs. The opposition parties consequently attempt to influence the formation of national policies by their criticism of pending legislation; by trying to obtain concessions on bills by proposing amendments to them; and by striving to increase support for their performance and policies inside and outside the Commons. They take advantage of any publicity and opportunity which they think might improve their chances at the next general election.

Inside Parliament, party discipline is exercised by the Whips, who are chosen from party MPs by the party leaders, and who are normally under the direction of a Chief Whip. Their duties include informing members of forthcoming parliamentary business; maintaining the party's voting strength in the Commons by seeing that their members attend all important debates or are 'paired' with the opposition (agreed matching numbers so that MPs need not be present in the House all the time); as well as conveying backbench opinion to the party leadership.

This line of communication is important if rebellion and disquiet are to be avoided. MPs will receive notice from the Whips' office of how important a particular vote is, and the information will be underlined up to three times. For example, a 'three-line whip' signifies a crucial vote, and failure to attend or comply with party instructions is usually regarded as a revolt against the party's policy. Party discipline is very strong in the Commons and less so in the Lords. But in both Houses it is essential to the smooth operation of party politics. A government with a large majority should not become complacent, nor antagonize its backbenchers. If it does so, a successful rebellion against the government or mass abstention from voting by its own side may destroy the majority and the party's policy.

Outside Parliament, party control rests with the national and local party organizations, which can be very influential. They promote the party at every opportunity, but especially at election time, when they are in charge of canvassing the public and electioneering on behalf of their party.

Parliamentary procedure

Parliamentary procedure in both Houses of Parliament is mainly based on custom, convention and precedent. It is also contained in standing orders which govern details of procedure, and which have been formulated over a long period of time.

The Speaker is the chief officer of the House of Commons, is elected by the MPs, and has full authority to interpret the rules and orders of the House. The Speaker is an elected MP who, on elevation to the Speaker's chair, ceases to be a political representative and becomes a neutral official. The parliamentary seat is not normally contested at a general election, although there have been exceptions to this convention. The Speaker protects the House against any abuse of procedure; may curtail debate in order that a matter can be voted on; has the power to adjourn the House to a later time: may suspend a sitting; controls the voting system; and announces the final result. In cases where there is a tie, the Speaker has the casting vote, but must exercise this choice in such a way that it reflects established conventions. The Speaker's position is very important to the orderly running of the House. MPs can be very combative and often unruly, to an extent that the Speaker is sometimes forced to dismiss or suspend a member from the House.

Debates in Parliament follow normal patterns. They are usually begun with a motion (or proposal) which, if supported, is then debated by the whole House. The matter is eventually decided by a simple majority vote after a division, which is called at the end of the discussion. MPs enter either the Yes' or TSfo' lobby to record their vote, but they may also abstain from voting. Debates in the House of Commons used to be the occasion for the actual making of policy. But this practice is now impossible because of the weight and complexity of government business.

The proceedings of both Houses of Parliament are normally open to the public, and may be viewed from the public and visitors' galleries. The transactions are published daily in Hansard (the Parliamentary 'newspaper'), which records most events verbatim, and are also widely commented upon by the media. The proceedings of both Houses are now televised, and radio transmissions may be broadcast live or at a later time in recorded form.

Legislative proceedings

The courts may occasionally extend the common law by their decisions. But the creation of new law and fundamental changes to existing law (outside European Community legislation) are the responsibility of Parliament. This mainly means the implementation of the sitting government's policies. But it can also cover wider matters of a non-party nature, and responses to European Community rulings.

A government will usually issue certain documents before the actual parliamentary law-making process commences. A Green Paper is a consultative document which allows interested parties to state their case before a bill is introduced into Parliament. A White Paper is not normally consultative in this wide sense, but is a preliminary document which itemizes the details of prospective government legislation.

A draft law, which has usually been drawn up by parliamentary and government civil servants, takes the form of a parliamentary\_bill. Most bills are public in that they relate to public or state policies. Private bills involve individual, corporate or local interests. Public bills may be introduced in either House of Parliament by the government or by private MPs in their personal capacity. A private member's bill, which is usually on a topic of interest to that MP, is normally defeated for lack of parliamentary time or support. But some important private members' bills have survived the various hurdles and have become law, such as Acts concerning homosexuality, abortion and sexual offences. A government will sometimes prefer a private member to introduce minor or controversial legislation, with a promise of governmental support in Parliament. As a rule, politically contentious public bills go through the Commons first, but some of an uncontroversial nature may be initiated in the - Lords. Whichever procedure is used, the bill must have passed through both Houses at some stage.

The Commons is normally the most important procedural step in this process. A bill will receive a formal first reading when it is introduced into the Commons by the government or a private member. After a variable period ranging from one day to several months, the bill is given its second reading after a debate on its general principles. An alternative at this stage is that an uncontroversial bill may be referred to a committee to see whether it warrants a second reading. After either of these methods, the bill is then usually passed to a standing committee for detailed discussion and amendment. As an alternative it can be referred for detailed analysis to the whole House sitting as a committee. This committee stage is followed by the report stage, during which further amendments to the bill may be suggested. The third reading of the bill considers it in its final form, usually on a purely formal basis. However, debate is still possible at this stage if demanded by at least six MPs. This delaying tactic may sometimes be used by the opposition parties to hold up the passage of a bill. But the government, in its turn, can introduce a 'guillotine motion' which cuts off further debate.

After the third reading, a Commons bill will be sent to the House of Lords. It will then go through broadly the same stages again, except for those steps which are unique to the Commons. The Lords can delay a non-financial bill for two sessions, or roughly one year. It can also propose amendments, and if amended the bill goes back to the Commons for further consideration. This amending function is an important power, and has been frequently used in recent years. But the Lords' role today is to act as a forum for revision, rather than as a rival to the elected Commons. In practice, the Lords' amendments can sometimes lead to the acceptance of changes by the government, or even a withdrawal of the bill.

When the bill has eventually passed through the Lords, it is sent to the monarch for the Royal Assent, which has not been refused since the eighteenth century. After the royal signature has been added, the bill becomes an Act of Parliament and is entered on the statute-book as representing the law of the land at that time.

This process from bill to Act may appear unduly drawn out. But it does normally avoid the dangers of hasty legislation. It ensures that the bill is discussed at all levels. It also allows the opposition parties to join in the legislative process, either by carrying amendments or sometimes by voting down a bill with the help of smaller parties and disaffected members of the government party.

Private bills are usually initiated by groups or organizations outside Parliament, such as local government authorities, which need special powers to carry out their business. The procedure for passing private bills is generally the same as for public bills, although in practice most of the work is done by committees. The sponsors or initiators must demonstrate the particular need for the bill, and any opposing interests must be heard during the legislative process. In theory, any individual can propose a private bill, but the time and expense involved usually render such a step unlikely.

*From bill to Act of Parliament*

Preliminary White or Green Paper HOUSE OF COMMON S

**First reading**

( or formal introduction of bill )

**Second reading**

(debate on general principles)

**Committee stage**

or whole House of Commons sitting as committee (detailed discussion and amendment)

**Report stage**

(amendments)

**Third reading**

(formal but debate possible)

**HOUSE OF LORDS**

**MONARCH ACT OF PARLIAMENT**

**3.4 The Government. The Civil Service**

*The government*

The British government normally consists of over a hundred ministers and other officials chosen from both Houses of Parliament, who are appointed by the monarch on the advice of the Prime Minister. They belong to the party which forms the majority in the Commons, and are collectively responsible for the administration of national affairs. The government can vary considerably in the number of ministers and departments set up by the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister, who is appointed by the monarch and is normally the leader of the majority party in the Commons, possesses a great deal of patronage in choosing ministers and deciding on the composition of the government. The Prime Minister's power stems from majority support in Parliament; from the authority to choose and dismiss minister; from the leadership of the party in the country; and from a control over policy-making. The Prime Minister usually sits in the Commons, as do most of the ministers, where they may all be questioned and held accountable for government actions and decisions. The Prime Minister has historically been the connection between the monarch and parliamentary government. This convention continues today in the weekly audience with the monarch, at which the policies

and business of the government are discussed.

The Prime Minister consequently has great power within the British system of government, and there are arguments which suggest that the office has become like an all-powerful presidency. But there are considerable checks on this power, both inside and outside the party and Parliament, which make the analogy less than accurate. However, it does seem that there is a greater emphasis upon prime ministerial government in Britain today, rather than the traditional constitutional notions of Cabinet government.

The Cabinet is normally composed of up to twenty senior ministers from the government, who are chosen and presided over by the Prime Minister. Examples are the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Finance Minister), the Foreign Secretary, the Home Secretary, the Minister of Defence, the Secretary of State for Education and Science, and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The Cabinet structure originated historically in meetings that the monarch had with leading ministers in a small royal Cabinet, outside the framework of the Privy Council. As the monarch gradually ceased to play a part in active politics because of the growth of parliamentary government and party politics, the Royal Cabinet developed more authority and independence, and became a parliamentary body.

Constitutional theory has traditionally argued that the Cabinet collectively initiates and decides government policy. It has control of the government apparatus and ministries because it is composed of members of the majority party in the Commons. But the convention that government rule is Cabinet rule seems to have become increasingly weaker. Since the Prime Minister is responsible for Cabinet agendas and for the control of Cabinet proceedings, the Cabinet itself can become merely a 'rubber-stamp' to policies which have already been decided upon by the Prime Minister, or by a smaller group sometimes called the 'Inner Cabinet'. Cabinet government appears to have lost some of its original impetus, although there are frequent demands that more deliberative power should be restored to it.

Much depends upon the personality of Prime Ministers in this situation. Some are strong and like to take the lead. Others have given the impression of working within the traditional Cabinet structure. Much of our information about the operation of the Cabinet comes from 'leaks', or information divulged by Cabinet ministers. Although the Cabinet meets in private and its discussions are meant to be secret, the public is usually and reliably informed of Cabinet deliberations by the media.

The mass and complexity of government business today, and the fact that ministers are very busy with their own departments, suggest that full debate in Cabinet on every item of policy is impossible. But it is widely felt that, while all the details cannot be discussed, the broad outlines of policy should be more vigorously debated in Cabinet. Critics argue that the present system concentrates too much power in the hands of the Prime Minister; overloads ministers with work; allows too many crucial decisions to be taken outside the Cabinet; and consequently reduces the notion of collective responsibility.

Ministerial responsibility is still an important constitutional concept, although some doubt its applicability today. Collective responsibility is that which all ministers, including those outside the Cabinet, share for government actions and policy. It means that Cabinet and other ministers should be seen to act as one. All must support a government decision in public, even though some may oppose it during the private deliberations. If a minister cannot do this, he or she may feel obliged to resign.

In addition to collective responsibility, a minister also has an individual responsibility for the work of the relevant government department. This means that the minister is answerable for any mistakes, wrongdoing or bad administration which occur, whether personally responsible for them or not. In such cases, the minister may resign, although this is not as common today as in the past.

Such responsibility enables Parliament to maintain at least some control over executive actions because the minister is answerable to Parliament. The shadow of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration also hangs over the work of a minister and civil servants.

Government departments (or ministries) are the chief instruments by which central government implements government policy. A change of government does not necessarily alter the number or functions of these departments. However, some governments have occasionally instituted programmes which have involved the reorganization, or replacement of existing ministries. Examples of government departments are the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Home Office, the Department of Education and Science, and the Treasury (of which the Chancellor of the Exchequer is head). Most of these central departments are in London and are collectively known as Whitehall.

The government departments are staffed by the Civil. Service, which consists of career administrators. Civil servants are employed by central government in London and throughout the country, and are involved in a wide range of government activities. They are responsible to the minister in whose department they work for the implementation of government policies. A change of minister or government does not require a change of civil servants, since they are expected to be politically neutral and to serve the sitting government impartially. Restrictions on political activities and publication are consequently imposed upon civil servants in order to ensure neutrality. There are some 600,000 civil servants in Britain today. Nearly half of these are women, but few of them achieve top ranks in the service.

There have been frequent accusations about the efficiency of the Civil Service, and civil servants do not have a particularly good public image, in spite of attempts at reform. It is often alleged that the service imposes a certain mentality upon the implementation of government policies, which successive ministers have been unable to combat. There may be some areas of concern. But the stereotyped image of the typical civil servant is not reflected in many who do a thorough, independent job of serving their political masters. The Civil Service is also highly regarded in other countries for its efficiency and impartiality.

*Local government*

Some countries, such as the USA and Canada, are federal. They are made up of a number of states, each of which has its own government with its own powers to make laws and collect taxes. In these countries the central governments have powers only because the state have given them powers. In Britain it is the other way around. Local government authorities (generally known as 'councils') only have powers because the central government has given them powers. Indeed, they only exist because the central government allows them to exist. Several times in the twentieth century British governments have recognized local government, abolishing some local councils and bringing new ones into existence.

The system of local government is very similar to the system of national government. There are elected representatives, called councillors (the equivalent of MPs). They meet in a council chamber in the Town Hall or Country Hall (the equivalent of Parliament), where they make policy which is implemented by local government officers (the equivalent of civil servants).

Most British people have far more direct dealings with local government than they do with national government. Local councils traditionally manage nearly all public services. Taken together, they employ three times as many people as the national government does. In addition, there is no system in Britain whereby a national government official has responsibility for a particular geographical area. (There is no one like a 'prefect' or

'governor'). In practice, therefore, local councils have traditionally been fairly free from constant central interference in their day to day work.

Local councils are allowed to collect one kind of tax. This is a tax based on property. (All other kinds are collected by central government.) It used to be called 'rates' and was paid only by those who owned property. Its amount varied according to the size and location of the property. In the early 1990s it was replaced by the 'community charge' (known as the 'poll tax'). This charge was the same for everybody who lived in the area covered by a council. It was very unpopular and was quickly replaced by the 'council tax', which is based on the estimated value of a property and the number of people living in it. Local councils are unable to raise enough money in this way for them to provide the services which central government has told them to provide. In addition, recent governments have imposed upper limits on the amount of council tax that councils can charge and now collect the taxes on business properties themselves (and then share the money out between local councils). As a result, well over half of a local council's income is now given to it by central government.

The modem trend has been towards greater and greater control by central government. This is not just a matter of controlling the way local government raises money. There are now more laws governing the way councils can conduct their affairs. On top of this, schools and hospitals can now 'opt out' of local-govemment control. Perhaps this trend is inevitable now that national party politics dominates local politics. Successful independent candidates (candidates who do not belong to a political party) at local election are becoming rarer and rarer. Most people now vote at local elections according to their national party preferences, if they bother to vote at all, so that these elections become a kind of opinion poll on the performance of the national government.

*Local government services*

Most of the numerous services that a modem government provides are run at local level in Britain. These include public hygiene and environment health inspection, the collecting of rubbish from outside people's houses (the people who do this are euphemistically known as 'dustmen'), and the cleaning and tidying of all public places (which is done by 'street sweepers'). They also include the provision of public swimming pools, which charge admission fees, and public parks, which do not. The latter are mostly just green grassy spaces, but they often contain children's playgrounds and playing fields for sports such as football and cricket which can be reserved in advance on payment.

Public libraries are another well-known service. Anybody can go into one of these to consult the books, newspapers and magazines there free of charge. If you want to borrow books and take them out of the library, you have to have a library card or ticket (these are available to people living in the area). Sometimes CDs and video cassettes are also available for hire. The popularity of libraries in Britain is indicated by the fact that, in a country without identity cards, a person's library card is the most common means of identification for someone who does not have a driving licence.

Counties are the oldest divisions of the country in England and Wales. Most of them existed before the Norman conquest. They are still used today for local government purposes, although a few have been 'invented' this century (e.g. Humberside) and others have no function in government but are still used for other purposes. One of these is Middlesex, which covers the western part of Greater London (letters are still addressed 'Middx') and which is the name of a top-class cricket team. Many countries have 'shire' in their name (e.g. Hertfordshire, Hampshire, Leicestershire). 'Shires' is what the counties were originally called.

Boroughs were originally towns that had grown large and important enough to be given their own government, free of

control by the country. These days, the name is used for local government purposes only in London, but many towns still proudly describe themselves as Royal Boroughs.

Parishes were originally villages centred on a local church. They became a unit of local government in the nineteenth century. Today they are the smallest unit of local government in England.

The name 'parish' is still used in the organization of the main Christian churches in England.

The organization of local government

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Cities and large towns in |  | The rest of England and Wales |
| England and Wales |  | and all of Scotland |
| 36 Metropolitan Districts |  | 10 Regions (Scotland) |
| 32 London Boroughs |  | 47 Countries (England and Wales) |
| Responsible for: |  | Responsible for: |
| • collection of council tax |  | • collection of council tax |
| • planning |  | • planning |
| • roads and traffic |  | • roads and safety |
| • housing |  | • disposal of rubbish |
| • building regulations |  | • education |
| • safety in public places |  | • social services |
| • collection of rubbish |  | • libraries |
| • disposal of rubbish |  | • police force |
| • education |  | • fire brigade |
| • social services |  | |
| • libraries |  | Districts |
| • leisure and recreation |  | Responsible for: |
| In these areas some services, |  | • housing |
| such as transport, the police |  | • local planning |
| force and the fire brigade, are |  | • collection of rubbish |
| run by special authorities, |  | • leisure and recreation |
| some of whose members are |  | • safety in public places |
| councillors. |  |
|  |  | |

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Why doesn’t Britain have a written constitutions? Does it need one?
2. The Crown: What are the powers of the monarch?
3. Westminster: Why did the Commons become more important than the lords? Draw a diagram showing the shape and layout of the House of Commons debating chamber. Give reasons why you think this arrangement is better or worse than the more common semi-circular debating chamber. The House of Lords: Do you think the Lords has become a more democratic institution after the Constitutional reform of 1999?
4. The electoral and party system: Does Britain have an adequate parliamentary electoral system? Explain the main difference between the Conservative and Labour Parties.
5. Whitehall: What does "cabinet government" mean? What are its strengths and weaknesses? Examine the role of the Prime Minister in modem Britain. Why are modem British PMs so powerful?
6. Who rales Britain: The Crown, The Commons, The Lords, The Prime Minister, The Cabinet, The Civil Service?
7. What is the range of responsibilities of the local government in Britain?

4 EDUCATION IN BRITAIN

4.1 School history and the present state school system

4.2 The National Curriculum

4.3 Public Examinations

4.4 Higher and further education.

**4.1 School history and** the present state school system

The basic features of the British educational system are the same as they are anywhere else in Europe: full-time education is compulsory up to the middle teenage years; the academic year begins at the end of summer; compulsory education is free of charge, but parents may spend money on educating their children privately if they want to. There are three recognized stages, with children moving from the first stage (primary) to the second stage (secondary) at around the age of eleven or twelve. The third (tertiary) stage is 'further' education at university or college. However, there is quite a lot which distinguishes education in Britain from the way it works in other countries. School life

There is no countrywide system of nursery (i.e. pre-primary) schools. In some areas primary schools have nursery schools attached to them, but in others there is no provision of this kind. The average child does not being full-time attendance at school until he or she is about five and starts primary school. Almost all schools are either primary or secondary only, the latter being generally larger.

Nearly all schools work a five-day week, with no half-day, and are closed on Saturdays. The day starts at or just before nine o'clock and finishes between three and four, or a bit later for older children. The lunch break usually lasts about an hour-and-a-quarter. Nearly two-thirds of pupils have lunch provided by the school. Parents pay for this, except for the 15% who are rated poor enough for it to be free. Other children either go home for lunch or take sandwiches.

Methods of teaching vary, but there is most commonly a balance between formal lessons with the teacher at the front of the classroom, and activities in which children work in small groups round a table with the teacher supervising. In primary schools, the children are mostly taught by a class teacher who teaches all subjects. At the ages of seven and eleven, children have to (or soon will have to) take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In secondary schools, pupils have different teachers for different subjects and are given regular homework.

Schools usually divide their year into three 'terms', starting at the beginning of September.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Autumn | Christmas | Spring | Easter | Summer | Summer |
| term | holiday | term | holiday | term | holiday |
|  | (about 2 |  | (about 2 |  | (about 6 |
|  | weeks) |  | weeks) |  | weeks) |

In addition, all schools have a 'half-term' (= half-term holiday), lasting a few days or week in the middle of each term.

The older children get, the more likely they are to be separated into groups according to their perceived abilities, sometimes for particular subjects only, sometimes across all subjects. But some schools teach all subjects to 'mixed ability' classes. The rights and wrongs of this practice have generated heated debate for several decades and there is great variety from school to school and area to area.

*Historical background*

The British government attached little importance to education until the end of the nineteenth century. It was one of the last governments in Europe to organize education for everybody. Britain was leading the world in industry and commerce, so, it was felt, education must somehow be taking care of itself. Today, however, education is one of the most frequent subjects for public debate in the country. To understand the background to this debate, a little history is needed.

Schools and other educational institutions (such as universities) existed in Britain long before the government began to take an interest in education. When it finally did, it did not sweep these institutions away, nor did it always take them over. In typically British fashion, it sometimes incorporated them into the system and sometimes left them outside it. Most importantly, the government left alone the small group of schools which had been used in the nineteenth century (and in some cases before then) to educate the sons of the upper and upper-middle classes. At these 'public' schools, the emphasis was on 'character-building' and the development of'team spirit' rather than on academic achievement. Stereotypical public schools:

* are for boys only from the age of thirteen onwards, most of whom attended a private 'prep' (= preparatory) school beforehand;
* take fee-paying pupils (and some scholarship pupils who have won a place in a competitive entrance exam and whose parents do not pay);
* are boarding schools (the boys live there during term-time);
* are divided into 'houses', each 'house' being looked after by a 'housemaster';
* make some of the senior boys 'prefects', which means that they have authority over the other boys and have their own servants (called 'fags'), who are appointed from amongst the youngest boys;
* place great emphasis on team sports;
* enforce their rules with the use of physical punishment;
* have a reputation for a relatively great amount of homosexual

activity;

* are not at all luxurious or comfortable.

However, this traditional image no longer fits the facts. These days, there is not a single public school in the country in which all of the above features apply. There have been a fairly large number of girls 'public schools for the last hundred years, and more recently a few schools have started to admit both boys and girls. Many schools admit day pupils as well as boarders, and some are day-schools only; prefects no longer have so much power or have been abolished altogether; has disappeared; there is less emphasis on team sport and more on academic achievement; life for the pupils is more physically comfortable than it used to be.

Among the most famous public schools are Eton, Harrow, Rugby and Winchester.

This involved the development of distinctive customs and attitudes, the wearing of distinctive clothes and the use of specialized items of vocabulary. They were all 'boarding schools' (that is, the pupils lived in them), so they had a deep and lasting influence on their pupils. Their aim was to prepare young men to take up positions in the higher ranks of the army, in business, the legal profession, the civil service and politics.

When the pupils from these schools finished their education, they formed the ruling elite, retaining the distinctive habits and vocabulary which they had learnt at school. They formed a closed group, to a great extent separate from the rest of society. Entry into this group was difficult for anybody who had a different education. When, in the twentieth century, education and its possibilities for social advancement came within everybody's reach, new schools tended to copy the features of the public schools. (After all, they provided the only model of a successful school that the country had).

Many of the distinctive characteristics of British education outlined below can be ascribed, at least partly, to this historical background. Of more recent relevance is Britain's general loss of confidence in itself. This change of mood has probably had a greater influence on education than on any other aspect of public life. The modem educational system has been through a period of constant change and it is difficult to predict what further changes will occur in the next decade. At the same time, however, there are certain underlying characteristics that seem to remain fixed.

*Organization*

Despite recent changes, it is a characteristic of the British system that there is comparatively little central control or uniformity. For example, education is manager not by one, but by three, separate government departments: the Department for Education and Employment is responsible for England and Wales alone - Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own departments. In fact, within England and Wales education has traditionally been seen as separate from 'training', and the two areas of responsibility have only recently been combined in a single department.

None of these central authorities exercises much control over the details of what actually happens in the country's educational institutions. All they do is to ensure the availability of education, dictate and implement is overall organization and set overall learning objectives (which they enforce through a system of inspectors) up to the end of compulsory education.

Central government does not prescribe a detailed programme of learning or determine what books and materials should be used. It says, in broad terms, what schoolchildren should learn, but it only offers occasional advice about how they should learn it. Nor does it dictate the exact hours of the school day, the exact dates of holidays or the exact age at which a child must start in full-time education. It does not manage an institution's finances either, it just decides how much money to give it. It does not itself set or

supervise the marking of the exams which older teenager do. In general, as many details as possible are left up to the individual institution or the Local Education Authority (LEA, a branch of local government).

One of the reasons for this level of 'grass-roots' independence is that the system has been influenced by the public-school tradition that a school is its own community. Most schools develop, to some degree at lest, a sense of distinctiveness. Many, for example, have their own uniforms for pupils. Many, especially those outside the state system, have associations of former pupils. It is considered desirable (even necessary) for every school to have its own school hall, big enough to accommodate every pupil, for daily assemblies and other occasional ceremonies. Universities, although financed by the government, have even more autonomy. Each one has complete control over what to teach, how to teach it, who it accepts as students and how to test these students.

Learning for its own sake, rather than for any particular practical purpose, has traditionally been given a comparatively high value in Britain. In comparison with most other countries, a relatively strong emphasis has been put on the quality of person that education produces (as opposed to the qualities of abilities that it produces). The balance has changed in the last quarter of the twentieth century (for example, there is now a high degree of concern about levels of literacy), but much of the public debate about educational policy still focuses not so much on how to help people develop useful knowledge and skills as on how education might help to bring about a better society - on social justice rather than on efficiency.

This approach has had a far-reaching effect on many aspects of the educational system. First of all, it has influenced the general style of teaching, which has tended to give priority to developing understanding rather than acquiring factual knowledge and learning to apply this knowledge to specific tasks. This is why British young people do not appear to have to work as hard as their counterparts in other European countries. Primary schoolchildren do not normally have formal homework to do and university students have fewer hours of programmed attendance than students on the continent do. (On the other hand, they receive greater personal guidance with their work). A second effect has been an emphasis on academic ability rather than practical ability (despite English anti-intellectualism). This has resulted in high-quality education for the intelligent and academically inclined (at the upper secondary and university levels) with comparatively little attention given to the educational needs of the rest.

The traditional approach, together with the dislike of centralized authority, also helps to explain why the British school system got a national curriculum (a national specification of learning objectives) so much later than other European countries. If your aim is so vague and universal, it is difficult to specify what its elements are. It is for the same reason that British schools and universities have tended to give such a high priority to sport. The idea is that it helps to develop the 'complete' person. The importance of school as a 'community' can increase this emphasis. Sporting success enhances the reputation of an institution. Until the last quarter of the twentieth century, certain sports at some universities (especially Oxford and Cambridge) and medical schools were played to an international standard. People with poor academic records were sometimes accepted as students because of their sporting powers (although, unlike in the USA, this practice was always unofficial).

Some of the many changes that have taken place in British education in the second half of the twentieth century simply

reflect the wider social process of increased egalitarianism. The elitist institutions which first set the pattern no longer set the trend, and are themselves less elitist.

In other cases the changes have been the result of government policy. Before 1965 most children in the country had to take an exam at about the age of eleven, at the end of their primary schooling. If they passed this exam, they went to a grammar school where they were taught academic subjects to prepare them for university, the professions, managerial jobs or other highly-skilled jobs; if they failed, they went to a secondary modem school, where the lessons had a more practical and technical bias. Many people argued that it was wrong for a person's future life to be decided at so young an age. The children who went to 'secondary modems' tended to be seen as 'failures'. Moreover, it was noticed that the children who passed this exam (known as the 'eleven plus') were almost all from middle-class families. The system seemed to reinforce class distinctions. It was also unfair because the proportion of children who went to a grammar school varied greatly from area to area (from 15% to 40%). During the 1960s these criticism came to be accepted by a majority of the public. Over the next decade the division into grammar schools and secondary modem schools was changed. These days, most eleven-year-olds all go on to the same local school. These schools are known as comprehensive schools. (The decision to make this change was in the hands of LEAs, so it did not happen at the same time all over the country. In fact, there are still one or two places where the old system is still in force).

However, the comprehensive system has also had its critics. Many people felt that there should be more choice available to parents and disliked the uniformity of education given to teenagers. In addition, there is a widespread feeling that educational standards fell during the 1980s and that the average eleven-year old in Britain is significantly less literate and less numerate than his or her European counterpart.

Starting in the late 1980s, two major changes were introduces by the government. The first of these was the setting up of a national curriculum. For the first time in British education there is now a set of learning objectives for each of compulsory school and all state schools are obliged to work towards these objectives. The other major change is that schools can now decide to 'opt out' of the control of the LEA and put themselves directly under the control of the appropriate government department. These 'grant-maintained' schools get their money directly from central government. This does not mean, however, that there is more central control. Provided they fulfil basic requirements, grant-maintained schools do not have to ask anybody else about how to spend their money.

**4.2 The National Curriculum**

Pupils aged 5 to 16 in state schools must be taught the National Curriculum, which made up of the following subjects: English, mathematics, science, design and technology; information technology, history, geography, music, art, physical education (PE) and a modem foreign language. The National Curriculum sets out, in broad terms, what schools must teach for each subject.

The National Curriculum is divided into four stages. These are called key stages and depend on pupil's ages. Pupils going into Key Stage 4 before September 1996 do not have to be taught design and technology, information technology and a modem foreign language. Pupils must also study religious education (RE), and secondary schools must provide sex education. The content of these two subjects is decided locally but must remain within the law. The Government also plans to make all secondary schools responsible for providing careers education.

Schools organise their own timetable, and can decide what else to teach their pupils.

Every school has National Curriculum documents for each subject. These documents describe what teachers must teach at each key stage.

Most National Curriculum subject are divided into different areas of learning. For example, English is divided into three areas: speaking and listening, reading, and writing.

The National Curriculum does not include detailed lesson plans for teachers. Schools and teachers draw up their own lesson plans based on the National Curriculum. Teachers will plan these lessons, taking account of their pupil's needs. Schools also decide for themselves which text books and other teaching materials to use.

The National Curriculum sets standards of achievement in each subject for pupils aged 5 to 14. For most subjects these standards range from levels 1 to 8. Pupils climb up the levels as they get older and learn more.

* The standards at level 2 should challenge typical 7-year-olds
* The standards at level 4 should challenge typical 11-year-olds
* The standards at levels 5 and 6 should challenge typical

14-year-olds

More able pupils will reach the standards above these levels, and exceptionally able 14-year-olds may reach the standards above level 8.

The National Curriculum for music, art and PE does not use levels 1 to 8. Instead, there is a single description of the standards that most pupils can expect to reach at the end of a key stage for each area of learning.

All teachers check their pupil's progress in each subject as a normal part of their teaching. They must also asses pupil's progress in English, mathematics and science against the National Curriculum standards when pupils reach ages 7, 11 and 14. The teacher decides which level best describes a pupil's performance in each area of learning in the subject. The teacher then uses these to work out an overall level in that subject.

There are national tests for 7-, 11- and 14-year-olds in English and mathematics. Pupils aged 11 and 14 are also tested in science. The tests give an independent measure of how pupils and schools are doing compared with the national standards in these subjects.

Most 16-year-old take GCSEs or similar qualifications.

One final point about the persistence of decentralization: there are really three, not one, national curricula. There is one for England and Wales, another for Scotland and another for Northern Ireland. The organization of subjects and the details of the learning objectives vary slightly from to the other. There is even a difference between England and Wales. Only in the latter is the Welsh language part of the curriculum.

The introduction of the national curriculum is also intended to have an influence on the subject-matter of teaching. At the lower primary level, this means a greater emphasis on what are known as 'the three Rs' (Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic). At higher levels, it means a greater emphasis on science and technology. A consequence of the traditional British approach to education had been the habit of giving a relatively large amount of attention to the arts and humanities (which develop the well-rounded human being), and relatively little to science and technology (which develop the ability to do specific jobs). The prevailing belief at the time of writing is that Britain needs more scientists and technicians.

4.3 Public exams

The organization of the exams which schoolchildren take from the age of about fifteen onwards exemplifies both the lack of uniformity in British education and also the traditional 'hands-off approach of British governments. First, these exams are not set by the government, but rather by independent examining boards. There are several of these. Everywhere except Scotland (which has its own single board), each school or LEA decides which board's exams its pupils take. Some schools even enter their pupils for the exams of more than one board.

Second, the boards publish a separate syllabus for each subject. There is no unified school-leaving exam or school-leaving certificate. Some boards offer a vast range of subjects. In practice, nearly all pupils do exam in English language, maths and a science subject, and most also do an exam in technology and one in a foreign language, usually French. Many students take exams in three or more additional subjects.

Third, the exams have nothing to do with school years as such. They are divorced from the school system. There is nothing to stop a sixty-five year-old doing a few of them for fun. In practice, of course, the vast majority of people who do these exams are school pupils, but formally it is individual people who enter for these exams, not pupils in a particular year of school. An example of the independence of the examining boards is the decision of one of them (the Northern Examinations Board) in 1992 to include certain popular television programmes on their English literature syllabus. This was against the spirit of the government's education policy at that time. The idea of 100,000 schoolchildren setting down to watch the Australian soap opera Neighbours as part of their homework made government ministers very angry, but there was nothing they could do to stop it. At the age of sixteen people are free to leave school if they want to. With Britain's newfound enthusiasm for continuing education (and because the general level of unemployment is now high), far fewer sixteen-year-olds go straight out and look for a job than used to. About a third of them still take this option, however. Most do not find employment immediately and many take part in training schemes which involve on-the-job training combined with part-time college courses. The word 'form' was the usual word to describe a class of pupils in public schools. It was taken over by some state schools. With the introduction of the national curriculum it has become common to refer to 'years'. However, 'form' has been universally retained in the phrase 'sixth form', which refers to those pupils who are studying beyond the age of sixteen.

An increasing number do vocational training courses for particular jobs and careers. Recent governments have been keen to increase the availability of this type of course and its prestige (which used to be comparatively low). In England and Wales, for those who stay in education and study conventional academic subjects, there is more specialization than there is in most other countries. Typically, a pupil spends a whole two years studying just three subjects, usually related ones, in preparation for taking A level exams, though this is something else which might change in the near future.

Exams and qualifications GCSE = General Certificate of Secondary Education. The exams taken by most fifteen-to sixteen-year-olds in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Marks are given for each subjects separately. The syllabuses and methods of examination of the various examining boards differ.

However, there is a uniform system of marks, all beinggraded from A to G. Grades A, В and С are regarded as 'good' grades.

SCE = Scottish Certificate of Education. The Scottish equivalent of GCSE. These exams are set by the Scottish Examinations Board. Grades are awarded in numbers (I = the best).

A Levels = Advanced Levels. Higher-level academic exams set by the same examining boards that set GCSE exams. They are taken mostly by people around the age of eighteen who wish to go on to higher education.

SCE 'Highers' = The Scottish equivalent of A-levels.

GNVQ = General National Vocational Qualification.

Courses and exams in job-related subjects. They are divided into five levels, the lowest level being equivalent to GCSEs/SCEs and the third level to A-levels/'Higher'. Most commonly, GNVQ courses are studied at College of Further Education, but more and more schools are also offering them.

**4.4 Higher and further education**.

The independence of Britain's educational institutions is most noticeable in universities. They make their own choice of who to accept on their courses. There is no right of entry to university for anybody. Universities normally select studies on the basis of А-level result and an interview. Those with better exam grades are more likely to be accepted. But in principle there is nothing to stop a university accepting a student who has no А-levels at all and conversely, a student with top grades in several А-levels is not guaranteed a place.

The availability of higher education has increased greatly in the second half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, finding a university place is not easy. Universities only take the better students. Because of this, and also because of the relatively higher degree of personal supervision of students which the low ratio of students to staff allows, nearly all university students complete their studies - and in a very short time too! In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, it is only for modem languages and certain vocational studies that students take more than three years. In Scotland, four years is the norm for most subjects.

Another reason for the low drop-out rate is that 'full-time' really means full-time. Students are not supposed to take a job during term time (normally about thirty to thirty-four weeks of the year). Unless their parents are rich, they receive a state grant of money which is intended to cover most of their living expenses during these times. This includes the cost of accommodation. A large proportion of students live 'on campus', (or, in Oxford and Cambridge, 'in college') or in rooms nearby, which tends to mean that the student is surrounded by a university atmosphere.

However, the expansion of higher education is putting a strain on these characteristics. More students means more expense for the state. The government's response has been to reduce the amount of the student grant and to encourage a system of 'top-up' loans instead. As a result, many more students cannot afford to live away from home. In 1975 it was estimated that 80% of all university students were non-local. This percentage is becoming lower and lower. In addition, a large number of students are being forced to 'moonlight' (that is, secretly do a part-time job). A further result of increased numbers of students without a corresponding increase in budgets is that the student/staff ratio has been getting higher. All of these developments threaten to reduce the traditionally high quality of British university education. They also threaten to reduce its availability to students from low-income families.

Types of university.

There are no important official or legal distinctions between the various types of university in the country. But is possible to discern a few broad categories.

* Oxbridge

This name denotes the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, both founded in the medieval period. They are federations of semi-independent colleges, each college having its own staff, known as 'Fellows'. Most college have their own dining hall, library and chapel and contain enough accommodation for at least half of their students. The Fellows teach the college students, either one-to-one or in very small groups (known as 'tutorials' in Oxford and 'supervisions' in Cambridge). Oxbridge has the lowest student/staff ratio in Britain. Lectures and laboratory work are organized at university level. As well as the college libraries, there are the two university libraries, both of which are legally entitled to a free copy of every book published in Britain. Before 1970 all Oxbridge colleges were single-sex (mostly for men). Now, the majority admit both sexes.

* The old Scottish Universities

By 1600 Scotland boasted four universities. They were Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and St. Andrews. The last of these resembles Oxbridge in many ways, while the other three are more like civic universities in that most of the students live at home or find their own rooms in town. At all of them the pattern of study is closer to the continental tradition than to the English one - there is less specialization than at Oxbridge.

* The early nineteenth-century English universities

Durham University was founded in 1832. Its collegiate living

arrangements are similar to Oxbridge, but academic matters are organized at university level. The University of London started in 1836 with just two colleges. Many more have joined science, scattered widely around the city, so that each collage (most are non-residential) is almost a separate university. The central organization is responsible for little more than exams and the awarding of degrees.

* The older civic ('redbrick') universities

During the nineteenth century various institutes of higher education, usually with a technical bias, sprang up in the new industrial towns and cities such as Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds. Their buildings were of local material, often brick, in contrast to the stone of older universities (hence the name, 'redbrick'). They catered only for local people. At first, they prepared students for London University degrees, but later they were given the right to award their own degrees, and so became universities themselves. In the mid twentieth century they started to accept students from all over the country.

* The campus universities

These are purpose-built institutions located in the countryside but close to towns. Examples are East Anglia, Lancaster, Sussex and Warwick. They have accommodation for most of their students on site and from their beginning, mostly in the early 1960s, attracted students from all over the country. (Many were known as centres of student protest in the late 1960s and early 1970s). They tend to emphasize relatively 'new' academic disciplines such as social sciences and to make greater use than other universities of teaching in small groups, often known as 'seminars'.

* The newer civic universities

These were originally technical colleges set up у local authorities in the first sixty years of this century. Their upgrading to university status took place in two waves. The first wave occurred in the mid 1960s, when ten of them (e.g. Aston in Birmingham, Salford near Manchester and Strathclyde in Glasgow) were promoted in this way. Then, in the early 1970s, another thirty became 'polytechnics', which meant that as well as continuing with their former courses, they were allowed to teach degree courses (the degrees being awarded by a national body). In

the early 1990s most of these (and also some other colleges) became universities. Their most notable feature is flexibility with regard to studying arrangements, including 'sandwich' courses (i.e. studies interrupted by periods of time outside education). They are now all financed by central government.

The Open Universities

This is one development in education in which Britain can to have led the world. It was started in 1969. It allows people who do not have the opportunity to be ordinary 'students' to study for a degree. Its courses are taught through television, radio and specially written coursebooks. Its students work with tutors, to whom they send their written work and with whom they then discuss it, either at meetings or through correspondence. In the summer, they have to attend short residential courses of about a week.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What is the compulsory school age in Britain?
2. The story of British schools: After 1944 almost all children attended one of two kinds of school. What were they called? What was the difference between them? In the 1960s this system was changed. What kind of school was introduced? What effect did the change have?
3. The private sector: Is the public school system socially divisive? Can state education be as good as the private system?
4. Name the two basic public examinations to assess English pupils at the age of sixteen and after another two voluntary years of schooling.
5. Educational reforms in the 1980s: Is the introduction of the National Curriculum likely to have good results?
6. What is the structure of the British Higher education?
7. What, in your opinion, are the strengths and weaknesses of Britain’s education system compared to Belarus?

**5 RELIGION IN BRITAIN**

5.1 Freedom of consciousness

5.2 The Church of England

5.3 Other conventional Christian churches

5.4 Other religions, churches and religious movements

**5.1 Freedom of consciousness**

The vast majority of people in Britain do not regularly attend religious services. Many do so only a few times in their lives. Most people's everyday language is no longer, as it was in previous centuries, enriched by their knowledge of the Bible and the English Book of Common Prayer. It is significant that the most familiar and well-loved English translation of the Bible, known as the King James Bible, was written in the early seventeenth century and that no later translation has achieved similar status.

It therefore seems that most people in Britain cannot strictly be describes as religious. However, this does not mean that they have no religious or spiritual beliefs or inclinations, Surveys have suggested that nearly three-quarters of the population in God and between a third and a half believe in concepts such as life after death, heaven and hell (and that half or more of the population believe in astrology, parapsychology, ghosts and clairvoyance). In addition, a majority approve of the fact that religious instruction at state schools is compulsory. Furthermore, almost nobody objects to the fact that the Queen is 'by the grace of God', or the fact that she, like all previous British monarchs, was crowned by a religious Figure (the Archbishop of Canterbury) in a church (Westminster Abbey) and that the British national anthem (God Save Our Queen) invokes God's help in protecting her.

The general picture, as with so many aspects of British life, is of a general tolerance and passive approval of the status quo. The majority attitude towards organized religion is rather similar to that towards the monarchy. Just as there is no serious republican movement in the country, so there is no widespread anti-clericalism. And just as there is no royalist movement either, so most people are not active participants in organized religion.

Freedom of religious belief and worship (and also the freedom to be a non-believer) is taken for granted in modem Britain, With the notable exception of Northern Ireland, a person's religion has almost no political significance, There are no important 'Christian' or anti-clerical political parties. Except perhaps for Muslims, there is no recognizable political pressure group in the country which is based on a particular religious ideology. To describe oneself as 'catholic' or 'church of England' or 'Methodist' or any other recognized label is to indicate one's personal beliefs but not the way one votes.

The religious conflicts of the past and their close relationship with politics have left only a few traces in modem times, and the most important of these are institutional rather than political: the fact that the monarch cannot, by law, be a Catholic; the fact that the twenty-six senior bishop in one particular church (the Church of England) are member of the House of Lords (where they are known as the 'Lords Spiritual'); the fact that the government has the right of veto on the choice of these bishops; the fact that the ultimate authority for this same church is the British Parliament. These facts point to a curious anomaly. Despite the atmosphere of tolerance and the separation of religion and politics, it is in Britain that we find the last two cases in Europe of 'established' churches, that is churches which are, by law, the official religion of a country. These cases are the Church of Scotland (see 'other Christian denominations' below) and the Church of England. The monarch is the official head of both, and the religious leader of the latter, the Archbishop of Canterbury, is appointed by the government.

However, the privileged position of the Church of England (also known as the Anglican Church) is not, in modem times, a political issue. Nobody feels that they are discriminated against if they do not belong to it. In any case, the Anglican Church, rather like the BBC, has shown itself to be effectively independent of government and there is general approval of this independence. In fact, there is a modem politics-and-religion debate, but now it is the other way around. That is, while it is accepted that politics should stay out of religion, it is point of debate as to whether religion should stay out of politics.

The Anglican Church used to be half-jokingly described as 'the Conservative party at prayer'. This reputation was partly the result of history and partly the result of the fact that most of its clergy and regular followers were from the higher ranks of society. However, during the 1980s and early 1990s it was common for the Church to publicly condemn the widening gap between rich and poor in British society. Its leaders, including the Archbishop of Canterbury himself, repeatedly spoke out against this trend, implying that the Conservative government was largely to blame for it - despite comments from government ministers that politics should be left to the politicians. The Archbishop also angered some Conservative Anglicans when, at the end of the Falklands/Malvinas War in 1982, he did not give thanks to God for a British victory. Instead, he prayed for the victims of the war on both sides.

In 1994 the Catholic Church in Britain published a report which criticized the Conservative government. Since the general outlook of Britain's other conventional Christian denominations has always been anti-Conservative, it appears that all the country's major Christian churches are now politically broadly left of centre.

**5.2 The Church of England. Anglicanism**

Although the Anglican Church apparently has much the largest following in England, and large minorities of adherents in the other nations of Britain, appearances can be deceptive. It has been estimated that less than 5% of those who, if asked, might describe themselves as Anglicans regularly attend services. Many others are christened, married and buried in Anglican ceremonies but otherwise hardly ever go to church. Regular attendance for many Anglicans is traditionally as much a social as a religious activity, and predominantly one for the upper and middle classes.

The doctrine of the Church of England was set out in the sixteenth century, in a document called the Thirty-Nine Articles. However, the main motivation for the birth of Anglicanism was more patriotic and political than doctrinal. As a result, it has always been what is called a 'broad church', willing to accommodate a wide variety of beliefs and practices. For example, the nature of its religious services varies quite widely from church to church, depending partly on the inclinations of the local priest and partly on local tradition.

Three main strands of belief can be identified. One strand is evangelical, or 'low church'. This places great emphasis on the contents of the Bible and is the most consciously opposed to Catholicism. It therefore adheres closely to those elements of the Thirty-Nine Articles that reject Papal doctrines and is suspicious of the hierarchical structure of the Church. It prefers plain services with a minimum of ceremony. In contrast, the beliefs of the 'Anglo-Catholic', or 'high church', strand are virtually identical to those of Catholicism - except that it does not accept the Pope as the ultimate authority. High church services are more colourful and include organ music and elaborate priestly clothing. Both these strands are traditional in their outlook. But there is also a liberal wing, which is willing to question some of the traditional Christian beliefs, is more inclined to view the Bible as merely a historical document, is more tolerant towards homosexuality and was the first to support moves to ordain women priests.

*Women priests*

On Wednesday 11 November 1992, at five in the evening, Dr George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, rose to announce a momentous decision. By just two votes more than the required two-thirds majority, the General Synod of the Anglican Church (its governing body) had voted to allow the ordination of women priests. The debate in the Synod had lasted more than six hours, and had been going on for years before that, both inside and outside the church, all over the country.

About eighteen months afterwards, the first women priests were ordained. Those who support this development believe that will help to give the Church of England a greater relevance to the modem world and finally bring it up to date. (Unlike the Catholic Church, it has always allowed its clergy to be married). Some who were opposed to the change have not accept the Synod's decision, and there are a few local cases of attempts to set up a rebel church. Some members of the Anglican Church have decided to 'go over to Rome - that is, to join the Catholic Church, which does not have women priests.

But to many, perhaps most, of its members, it is the 'Englishness' of the Anglican Church which is just as important as its religious doctrine. This is what gives it meaning and holds its various strands together. Without it, many Anglo-Catholics would be Catholic, many low churchers and liberals would from their own sects or join existing nonconformist groups, and a very large number would simply cease to have anything to do with organized religion at all. Perhaps this is why an opinion poll in the 1980s showed that most people, displaying apparently uncharacteristic intolerance, approve of the law that does not permit a Catholic monarch.

At present, this national distinctiveness is emphasized by the Anglican Church's position as the official religion. It has been argued that the tie between Church and State should be broken; that is, that the Church should be disestablished so that, after losing its extreme members to other churches, it could spend less time on internal disagreement and more on the moral and spiritual guidance of its remaining members. Those who are against this move fear that it would cause the obvious Englishness of the Church to disappear and thus for the number of its adherents to drop sharply.

**5.3 Other conventional Christian churches**.

*Catholicism*

After the establishment of Protestantism in Britain, Catholicism was for a time an illegal religion and then a barely tolerated religion. Not until 1850 was a British Catholic hierarchy reestablished. Only in this century has it been as open about its activities as any other religion. Although Catholics can now be found in all ranks of society and in all occupations, the comparatively recent integration of Catholicism means that they are still under-represented at the top levels. For example, although Catholics comprise more than 10% of the population, they comprise only around 5$ of MPs.

A large proportion of Catholics in modem Britain are those whose family roots are in Italy, Ireland or elsewhere in Europe. The Irish connection is evident in the large proportion of priests in England who come from Ireland (they are sometimes said to be Ireland's biggest export!).

Partly because of its comparatively marginal status, the Catholic Church, in the interests of self-preservation, has maintained a greater cohesiveness and uniformity than the Anglican Church. In modem times it is possible to detect opposing beliefs within it (there are conservative and radical/liberal wings), but there is, for example, more

centralized control over practices of worship. Not having had a recognized, official role to play in society, the Catholic Church in Britain takes doctrine and practice (for example, weekly attendance at mass) a bit more seriously than it is taken in countries where Catholicism is the majority religion - and a lot more seriously than the Anglican Church in general does.

This comparative dedication can be seen in two aspects of Catholic life. First, religious instruction is taken more seriously in Catholic schools than it is in Anglican ones, and Catholic schools in Britain usually have a head who is either a monk, a friar or a nun. Second, there is the matter of a attendance at church. Many people who hardly even step inside a church still feel entitled to describe themselves as Anglican'. In contrast, British people who were brought up as Catholics but who no longer attend mass regularly or receive the sacraments do not normally describe themselves as 'Catholic'. They qualify this label with 'brought up as' or 'lapsed'. Despite being very much a minority religion in most places in the country, as many British Catholics regularly go to church as do Anglicans.

*Episcopalianism*

The Anglican Church is the official state religion in England only. There are, however, churches in other countries (such as Scotland, Ireland, the USA and Australian) which have the same origin and are almost identical to it in their general beliefs and practices. Members of these churches sometimes describe themselves as 'Anglican'. However, the term officially used in Scotland and the USA is 'Episcopalian' (which means that they have bishops), and this is the term which is often used to denote all of these churches, including the Church of England, as a group.

Every ten tears the bishops of all the Episcopalian churches in the world gather together in London for the Lambeth Conference, which is chaired by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Despite the name 'Canterbury', the official residence of the head of the Church of England is Lambeth Palace in London.

In the last two centuries, the influence of the Calvinism tradition has been left in laws relating to Sundays. These laws have recently been relaxed, but shop opening hours, gambling and professional sport on Sundays are still all restricted in small ways. In some places in rural Wales, where nonconformism is traditionally strong, Sundays are still 'dry'; that is, the pubs stay closed.

*Other conventional Christian churches*

In many ways, Anglicanism represents a compromise between Protestantism and Catholicism. Its stated doctrine, which rejects the authority of the Pope and other important aspects of Catholic doctrine, is Protestant. But its style, as shown by its hierarchical structure and its forms of worship, is rather Catholic.

When Protestantism first took root in Britain, there were many people who rejected not only Catholic doctrine but also 'Romish' style. These people did not join the newly-established Anglican Church. They regarded both the authority given to its clergy and its continuation of orthodox ritual as obstacles to true worship. Instead, they placed great importance on finding the truth for oneself in the words of the Bible and on living an austere life of hard work and self-sacrifice. They disapproved of the pursuit of pleasure and therefore frowned on public entertainments such as the theatre, on drinking, on gambling and on any celebration of the sexual aspect of life.

This is the origin of the Puritan/Calvinism tradition in Britain. The first church within this tradition was the Presbyterian Church. In Scotland, this form of Protestantism was so strong that it became the nation's established church. The Church of Scotland has a separate organization from the Anglican Church. It has no bishops. Its head, or 'Moderator', is elected by its general assembly. It is the biggest religion in Scotland, where it is often known simply as 'the kirk' (the Scots word for 'church'). There are also many Presbyterians in England and a large numbers in Northern Ireland.

In England, those Protestants who did not accept the authority of the Anglican Church were known as 'dissenters' and later, as tolerance grew, as 'nonconformists'. These days, when refusal to conform to the established church is irrelevant, they simply called 'members of the

free churches'. A great many different free-church groups have come into being over the centuries. In the details of their organization, styles of worship and doctrinal emphasis, the various nonconformist groups differ considerably. However, they all share, in varying degrees, certain characteristics: they regard simplicity and individual prayers as more important than elaborate ritual and public ceremony; there is comparatively little difference between their clergy (if they have any at all) and their lay members; they praise self-denial, although to a lesser extent than the original Puritans. For example, many are teetotal (their members do not drink alcohol).

After Presbyterians, the largest traditional nonconformist group in Britain is the Methodist Society. Methodists follow the teachings of John Wesley, an eighteenth century preacher who started his career as an Anglican clergyman. He had little doctrinal disagreement with the established church. However, he and his followers considered that it did not care enough about the needs of ordinary people and that its hierarchy was not serious enough about the Christian message. The Salvation Army grew out of the Wesleyan movement.

Two other nonconformist groups with a long history are the Baptist and the Quakers. The former are comparatively strict both in their interpretation of the Bible and in their dislike of worldly pleasure. The latter, also known as the Society of Friends, are a very small group whose notable characteristics are their complete lack of clergy and their pacifism. They refuse to fight in any war, though they will do ambulance and hospital work.

**5.4 Other religions, churches and religious movements** Since it is a multicultural country where the pressure to conform is comparatively weak, Britain is home to followers of almost every religion and sect imaginable. Some of these are offshoots, or local combinations, of those already mentioned. For example, the only Church of distinctly Welsh origin calls itself both 'Calvinistic Methodist' and 'Presbyterian Church of Wales'. The number of followers of all the traditional Christian churches have been slowly but steadily declining in the second half of the twentieth century. Other Christian sects and churches have been growing. Because of their energetic enthusiasm and their desire to attract new followers, they are sometimes characterized by the term 'evangelical'. Most of them are similar to traditional nonconformist groups in that they avoid rigid ritual and place great emphasis on scripture. In the case of some groups, their interpretations of the Bible are often literal: the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists (all of which originated in the USA) are examples. These groups, and others, also provide a strict code of behaviour for their followers. The fastest-growing type of evangelical Christianity, however, places less emphasis on dogma, sin, or giving people a code of behaviour. Instead, the emphasis is on the spiritual and miraculous; on revelation. Gathering often involve joyful singing. There is a belief in spiritual healing of the sick. The oldest existing church of this type in Britain is called Pentecostal, and this term is sometimes used to denote all such groups. Pentecostalism has had a small working-class following for many years. Its recent growth is among the middle class. Many groups began with meeting in people's living rooms, where formality is at a minimum. Another term sometimes used of these groups is 'charismatic', reflecting both their enthusiasm and their emphasis on the miraculous. The growth of these groups might indicate that many British people feel a gap in their lives which neither the material benefits of modem life nor the conventional churches can fill. Some people are turning even further afield, beyond the bounds of the Christian tradition. The term New Age' is used to cover a very wide range of beliefs which can involve elements of Christianity, eastern religions and ancient pagan beliefs all mixed in together. Interests and beliefs of this kind are not new in Britain. Theosophy, Druidism, Buddism, Christian Scientism (which believes in the control of the body through the mind) and many other beliefs have all had their followers in this country for a hundred years or more. Until the 1960s such people came exclusively from a small set of the upper middle class. Since then, however, New Age beliefs have filtered downwards to other sections of the social scale. Despite their great variety and lack of exclusiveness, two features seem to be common to all New Age beliefs: first, an emphasis on personal development (often seen as spiritual development); second, respect for the natural environment.

The remaining religious groups with significant numbers of followers in Britain are all associated with racial minorities. The most well-established of these are the Jews. Anti-Semitism exists in Britain, but for a long time it has been weaker that it is in most other parts of Europe. The security and confidence of Judaism in Britain can be seen both in the healthy proportion of Jews in Parliament and in the fact that within it there is, quite openly, the same struggle between orthodox/conservative and liberal/radical viewpoints as there is in the Anglican and Catholic churches.

The numbers of followers of the Christian Orthodox, Sikh, Hindu and Muslim religions are all growing, mainly because of high birth rates among families belonging to them. The last of these is by far the largest. Its continued growth is also for another reason. Relative poverty, racial discrimination and occasional conflict with the authorities have cause people brought up as Muslims to be politicized - more so than any other religious group in the country. As a result, young Muslims are less likely to drift away from their religion than the young of other faiths. One example of conflict is the Salman Rushdie affair. Another is the question of Muslim schools. There have been both Catholic and Jewish state schools for some time now. The country's Muslims are demanding the same opportunity.

Finally, it is necessary to mention what are called 'cults'. The beliefs of these groups vary so widely that it is impossible to generalize about them. What they seem to have in common is the style of their belief, involving absolute commitment to and unquestioning obedience of the leader around whom they are centred (it is often only in this sense that they can be called religions). Cult have a bad reputation for using mind-control techniques. Their extremist tendencies are often offensive to most people and, with a few exceptions, each individual cult is tiny. However, it has been estimated that there are between 500 and 700 of them in the country and that, taken together, they have nearly half a million followers.

**STUDY QUESTIONS:**

1. In what ways does the Church of England is typical of the English character?
2. What are the essential differences between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, the two "established Churches" of Britain?
3. What are the characteristic features of "New Age" beliefs?
4. In what ways, and to what extent, can different churches and religions in Britain be associated with particular geographical areas and particular social classes?

**6. WELFARE STATE**

6.1 Historical background. The origins of the welfare state in Britain

**6.2 The National Health Service**

**6.3 Personal Social Services and Charities**

**6.4The Social Security System**

**6.1 Historical background**

Britain can claim to have been the first large country in the world to have accepted that it is part of the job of government to help any citizen in need and to have set up what is generally known as a 'welfare state'.

Before the twentieth century, welfare was considered to be the responsibility of local communities. The 'care' provided was often very poor. An especially hated institution in the nineteenth century was the workhouse, where the old, the sick, the mentally handicapped and orphans were sent. People were often treated very harshly in workhouses, or given as virtual slaves to equally harsh employers.

During the first half of the twentieth century a number of welfare benefits were introduced. These were a small old-age pension scheme (1908), partial sickness and unemployment insurance (1912) and unemployment benefits conditional on regular contributions and proof of need (1934). The real impetus for the welfare state came in 1942 from a government commission, headed by William Beveridge, and its report on 'social insurance and allied services'. In 1948 the National

Health Act turned the report's recommendations into law and the National Health Service was set up.

The mass rush for free treatment caused the government health bill to swell enormously. In response to this, the first payment within the NHS (a small fixed charge for medicines) was introduced in 1951. Other charges (such as that for dental treatment in 1952) followed.

The health and social welfare system is part of everyone's life in Britain. It provides help for anyone who is raising a family or who is elderly, Sick, disable, unemployed, widowed or disadvantaged.

Everyone at some point in their lives will receive help from its varied services, ranging from health checks for children, home help for disabled or elderly people or cash benefits to cover periods of unemployment.

The three pillars of the health and social welfare system are:

The National Health Service - the health of the community is the responsibility of the NHS, free to everyone who normally lives in Britain.

The Personal Social Services - provided by local authorities for elderly and disabled people, those with mental disorders and for families and their children.

Social Security - designed to secure a basic standard of living for people who are unemployed, help for families and help towards the coast of disablement.

**6.2 The National Health Service**

The NHS is a central element of the welfare state, present on virtually every high street in the form of local pharmacists and in every community and neighbourhood in the form of General Practitioners (GPs) and dental services.

On a typical day in England, nearly three quarters of a million people will visit their doctor and one and a half million prescription items will be dispensed by pharmacies. Ambulances will make 8,000 emergency journeys, 2,000 babies will be delivered, 90,000 people will visit a hospital outpatient clinic and more than half a million households will receive help in the home.

The NHS which provides all these services has a yearly budget of more than £41 billion. With one million staff, it is one of the largest employers in the world.

The principles on which it was founded at its creation in 1948 remain true today: that there should be a free, comprehensive health service for everyone according to need, regardless of their income.

**The aims of the NHS** are clear. They are to improve the health of the nation as a whole by:

* promoting health
* preventing ill health
* diagnosing and treating injury and disease and
* caring for those with long-term illness and disability.

To achieve these aims, the NHS provides a comprehensive range of care, nearly all of which is free:

* primary care through family doctors, dentists and other health care professionals
* secondary care through hospitals and ambulance services
* tertiary care through specialist hospitals treating particular types of illness or disease.

The NHS also collaborates with social services to provide community care.

*Primary care*

The vast majority of people are seen by primary care services in the community. They remain the first point of contact most people have with the NHS: between them they cater for about 90 per cent of patient contact with the health service, at half the cost of hospital care. The Government's long-standing policy is to build up and extend these services to relieve the more costly secondary care services of hospital and specialist services.

Primary care is provided by family doctors, dentists, opticians and pharmacists, who work within the NHS as independent practitioners. Other professionals involved in primary care include district nurses, health visitors, midwives, speech therapists, physiotherapists, chiropodists, dieticians and counsellors.

GPs or family doctors are present in every community and they remain the backbone of the health service. They provide essential primary care and act as gatekeepers to other services, referring patients on when necessary. Every year there are some 250 million GP consultations and some six million people visit a pharmacy every day.

Visits to doctors or dentists may be for treatment or for preventative advice. Preventing ill-health is an important part of a GP's work, and most GPs run programmes to prevent heart disease and stroke, to manage chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes and to improve childhood immunisation rates.

About 80 per cent of GPs work in partnerships or group practices - often as members of primary health care teams. Primary health care teams also include health visitors, district nurses and midwives who are salaried NHS staff, and sometimes social workers and other professionals employed by the health authorities. GPs often work in health centres which offer people a range of health services in one place.

Other key primary care professionals include: midwives who care for women throughout pregnancy, birth and for 28 days after the baby is born. Some are based in hospital and some go out into the community;

health visitors who promote health for families and are responsible for preventative action. They aim to identify the health needs of the local population and work closely with other NHS colleagues, district nurses who care for people in their homes or elsewhere outside the hospital setting. Like health visitors, they offer advice in health promotion and education.

The 1997 NHS Primary Care Act introduced greater flexibility in the delivery of primary health care services for patients. The new law allows GPs, dentists, NHS trusts and NHS staff to develop, with health authorities and health boards, new ways of delivering their primary care services.

From October 1998 pilot schemes began in areas with high levels of illness and where it is often difficult to recruit GPs. There are two types of scheme:

* one which will enable NHS trusts or GP practices to employ GPs on a salary (instead of a self-employed basis), with the aim of giving patients who live in areas of high health risk access to a flexible family doctor service;
* one to create primary health care 'one-stop shops' where GPs, community nurses and other professionals work as a single team in the community offering a range of services from eye tests to counselling.

The new Primary Care Groups - local partnerships between family doctors and community nurses - will be expected to play an increasing role in taking decisions about services for patients.

*Secondary care*

While Primary Care Groups may be the first point of call, secondary care, managed by NHS Trusts, deal with any further treatment or care someone may need. This can range from health advice to some of the most sophisticated treatment in the world.

There are around 300 district general hospitals in England, found in many large towns and cities. They provide a range of services from the care of the elderly to maternity services, supported by services such as anaesthetics, pathology and radiology. Almost all district hospitals have accident and emergency departments for emergency admissions.

Patients either attend as day cases, in-patients for a longer stay or out-patients. There are also patients who attend wards for treatments such as dialysis. The advent of new treatments has meant the trend has been towards more patients treated as day care and fewer long-stay wards.

Tertiary care

Some hospitals provide specialist services such as heart and liver transplants, treatments for rare cancers and craniofacial services. These specialist services cover patients over more than one district or region.

There are also specialist hospitals of international renown such as the Hospital for Sick Children at Great Ormond Street, Moorfields Eye Hospital and the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery. As well as offering highly specialised treatments, these hospitals are also centres for teaching and international research.

The Government wants to promote a partnership between the public and private sectors in many areas of industry and services. The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) was launched in 1992 for this purpose: in the health service it means encouraging private companies to help finance the design, construction and running of NHS buildings and support services.

In May 1997, in order to boots the PFI, the new Government passed legislation which made the powers of NHS Trust clearer when signing PFI agreements. Further schemes costing £2,500 million have since been announced, amounting to the biggest hospital building programme in the history of the NHS.

*Community Care*

Social services have the lead responsibility for community care services to meet the needs of older people, people with disabilities, mentally ill people or other vulnerable members of society. The NHS, however, has an important role in providing some services and in collaborating closely with social services to plan and deliver community care.

Here the role of the NHS includes helping to assess people's needs for community care, liaising with social services over hospital discharges to make sure people get the continuing care they need, as well as delivering some services. The NHS makes an important contribution to community care services, for example, district nurses provide nearly 2.5 million episodes of care annually.

The NHS is free at the point of delivery to anyone normally resident in Britain. All taxpayers and employees contribute to its cost.

About 82 per cent of the coast of the health service is paid for by general taxes. The rest comes from:

* a proportion of National Insurance contributions (paid by working people and employers) -12.2 per cent
* charges towards the costs of certain items, such as drugs prescribed by GPs, dental treatment and sight tests - 2.3 per cent.

(Children and adults who may have difficulties paying are exempted from these charges.).

* land sales and other schemes for generating income - less than one per cent.

In addition:

* health authorities are free to raise funds from voluntary sources and
* some NHS hospitals take private patients who pay the full cost of their accommodation and treatment.

The NHS is one of the largest employers in the world, and staff costs account for two-thirds of all expenditure. About one tenth of the budget, some £4 billion, is spent each year on medicines.

In terms of spending on patients, more than two-fifths of total hospital and community health services expenditure, is on people aged 64 and over, while they make up just 16 per cent of the population.

The pie chart on the left shows spending in terms of different services:

* Hospital and Community Health Services provide hospital care and a wide range of community services
* Family Health Services (FHS) provide general medical, dental, pharmaceutical and some ophthalmic services, and covering the cost of medicines prescribed by GPs
* Central Health and Miscellaneous Services provide services which are most effectively administered centrally such as welfare food (such as free milk and vitamins for the children of families on Income Support) and support to the voluntary sector
* The administrative costs of the health departments are included under Departmental Administration.

Spending on health is one of the Government's top priorities. Spending on the NHS has increased in real terms for many years: the total in 1996-1997 was £35 billion; in 1997-1998 this figure increased to nearly £42 billion, which amounts to £1,700 for every household in the country.

In July 1998 the Government announced it would provide an extra £20 billion over the next three years. That amounts to an increase of 4.7% ayear above inflation between 1998-1999 and 2001-2002.

This investment in the NHS is planned to bring a host of improvements to services:

* improve hospitals and GP services
* provide for the largest hospital building plan ever
* reduce waiting lists
* finance reform, based on partnership of all health bodies, with GPs and nurses playing a more important role
* begin to reduce avoidable illness, disease and injury and
* reduce the rate of growth in emergency admissions.
* Central Government is directly in charge of the NHS, led by the Secretary of State for Health and a team of ministers at the Department of Health. The Department is responsible for planning a health strategy in England.

Within that department, management of the service is led by the NHS Management Executive. The NHS Management Executive is responsible for developing policies which ensure the quality of health services. The Executive has eight regional offices, which liaise with the health authorities in their region.

Services are administered by a range of health authorities and health boards throughout Britain. There are 100 health authorities in England and five in Wales, 15 health boards in Scotland and four health and social services boards in Northern Ireland. They are all responsible for identifying the health care needs of the people living in their area. They also arrange for services from doctors, dentists, pharmacists and opticians and administers their contracts.

Community health councils (local health councils in Scotland) represent the opinion of local people on the health services provided and on any planned changes.

Health authorities and boards cooperate closely with the local authorities in charge of social work, environmental health, education and other services.

The new Health Act 1999 encourages partnership within the NHS and between the health service and local authorities to improve health care, and has created two bodies to drive quality in the NHS. Its main aspects are:

* the creation of Primary Care Groups and Trusts, teams of GPs, community nurses and social services staff, to take control of most of the NHS budget from April 1999. The new teams put local doctors and nurses in the driving seat in shaping local health care;
* new powers to break down barriers between health and social services and between the NHS and local authorities, to encourage partnership working and deliver health improvements;
* the introduction of new legal duties of quality of care and of partnership to drive up standards of care;
* two new national bodies, the National Institute for Clinical Excellence and the Commission for Health Improvement, to encourage best practice, spread good-value new treatments across the NHS and sort out problems - all to improve quality;
* Health Action Zones, formed in some of the most deprived areas of the country and covering some 13 million people, which will tackle health problems of local people;
* NHS Direct - a 24-hour telephone hotline staffed by nurses to help reduce pressure on hospitals and GPs by giving on-the-stop health advice.

NHS staff

The NHS is Europe's largest employers with a workforce of nearly one million people. Nurses and midwives make up nearly half the entire workforce in England. Staff costs account for roughly 70 per cent of spending on hospitals and community health services.

The numbers of GPs in England has risen by nine per cent between 1987-1997, with all of the increase occurring amongst women. The numbers of ancillary and maintenance and works staff directly employed by the NHS has fallen since the introduction of competitive tendering which has led to many of these jobs being carried out by the private sector.

In September 1996 approximately 940,000 non-medical staff were employed in the NHS hospital and community health services:

* 67 per cent of these staff were directly involved in patients care and 33 per cent were management and support staff
* there were 332,660 nurses, midwives and health visitors
* there were 167,430 administration and estates staff
* just under 80 per cent of the non-medical workforce were female and over five per cent were from ethnic minority groups.
* There were 28,937 GPs in England in October 1997. By 1996, nearly a third were female, compared with just over a fifth in 1986.

The contribution made by the Voluntary Sector

The voluntary sector plays an important role in supporting patients and health services. The Government gives grants to a large number of voluntary organisations working in health and personal social services in recognition of the valuable work they do.

The money - £59 million in 1996-1997 goes mainly to national organisations dealing with: children people from ethnic minorities older people people with HIV/AIDS

carers people suffering from drug or alcohol misuse.

In Scotland, Government grants for 1996-1997 amounted to £9 million. In Northern Ireland the Department of Health and Social Services spent £6.4 million in 1996-1997 to support voluntary work in the health service.

Private medicine

About 11 per cent of the population in Britain is covered by private medical insurance and it is estimated that about three quarters of people receiving treatment in private hospitals or NHS pay beds are funded by health insurance schemes.

NHS patients are occasionally treated in the private sector (at public expense) in cases where doctors and managers consider it will be good value for money. The scale of private medicine compared to the NHS, however, is small.

Many overseas patients come to be treated in British private hospitals: Harley Street in London is world famous as a centre for medical consultants.

**6.3 Personal Social Services**

Social services provide £10 billion worth of care a year to vulnerable or disadvantage members of society. They cover the whole age range to provide for the poorly cared-for child to people who are approaching the end of their life. In between they care for people with mental health problems, physical disability or learning disabilities.

Personal social services are the responsibility of local social services authorities in England and Wales, social work departments in Scotland and health and social services boards in Northern Ireland.

The main services they provide are:

* residential care
* day care
* services for those confined to home and
* various forms of social work.
* Social Services spending
* In 1997-1998, current expenditure in England on Personal Social Services was £10 billion, or about £200 per head
* Services for children and older people accounted for nearly three-quarters of spending
* The single biggest item of expenditure was residential care for older people
* All but two per cent of the remainder was for people with a mental illness, or physical or learning disabilities
* Spending on residential services accounted for just under half of the total

Modernising Social Services

In November 1998 the Government announced a new £3 billion programme to reform social services in a White Paper Modernising Social Services. The Paper proposes ways of making sure local

councils, the NHS, voluntary bodies and commercial providers work together to deliver improvements, which include:

* promoting chances for people to live independent, fulfilling lives
* improving the protection of vulnerable people
* raising the standards of services

The White Paper introduces plans for:

* a commission for care standards, an independent watchdog for each English region to regulate services whether they are provided in people's own homes, through organisations such as fostering agencies or in residential homws
* new national standards of performance for local authorities and annual reports an what councils have achieved or not achieved
* children's rights officers to inspect children's homes
* the General Social Council, whose job will be to ensure the proper regulation and training of all the social care workforce

*Family and voluntary carers*

Much of the care of older and disabled people is provided by the community - by families, self-help groups and voluntary agencies, leaving the statutory sector to provide the skilled care needed in particular services. There are about seven million such carers - one in eight adults in Britain.

The Government acknowledges the crucial role of carers. People who provide substantial, regular care have a right to have their own needs for help assessed. The Government also plans to create a national strategy for carers which will focus on recognising the importance of their role, consulting them and supporting their essential work.

There are nearly 200,000 voluntary organisations and charities concerned with health and social welfare. They range from national bodies such as Help the Aged to small, individual self-help groups. As demand for personal social services growth the contribution of the voluntary sector is also becoming increasingly important.

The demand for social services is increasing became of the growing numbers of *older people* and opportunities for older, disabled, mentally ill people and those with learning difficulties to live in the community, supported by health and social services. Most older people continue to live in their own homes, with appropriate help. Only a small number - some five per cent - of people over 65 live in residential accommodation. In February 1999 the Royal Commission on Long-Term Care reported on the future of care for the elderly. The Government is consulting on its recommendation that the costs should be sharted by the individual and the State.

Services for older people, whether statutory or voluntary, are designed to help them live in their own home whenever possible. The services provide include help in the house, meals brought to the home, laundry services, sitters-in and night attendants. There are also day centres, luncheon clubs and recreational facilities which they may travel to.

Equipment, aids and adaptations to the home are available to help older people manage in their own homes. A special alarm system, for example, is provided by the local authority which allows older people to summon help in an emergency. Some local authorities or voluntary organisations run visiting services to check on the welfare of older people in the neighbourhood.

The trend in residential care for older people has been away from homes provided by the local authority towards greater numbers of places in private and voluntary-run homes. Local authorities do, however, have a duty to provide homes designed for older people. These are known as sheltered accommodation, and many have warders on site.

Transport for older people is often free or subsidised - paid for in either care by the local authority.

*Disabled people*

There are some six million adults in Britain who have one or more disability. Some seven per cent of these (about 400,000 people) live in communal establishments. As part of the reforms of the early 1990s, there has been a trend towards supporting disabled people to live independently in their own homes, providing them with day and domiciliary services. Social services also provide respite care so that people who regularly care for disabled people can have a rest.

Local social services are required to identify the number of disabled people in their area and to publicise services. Services include advice and help to rehabilitate disabled people or help them adjust to a recent disability. They also cover day centres or other places where social, occupational, educational and recreational facilities are provided.

Specially-designed housing may be available for those able to look after themselves, or adaptations to the home can be made by social services, for example, ramps for wheelchairs or stair lifts.

*People with learning disabilities*

Social services are the lead statutory body for planning and arranging services for people with learning disabilities. The help they provide or arrange includes short-term care, support for families in their own homes, residential accommodation if a person needs it and activities outside the home.

People with learning disabilities are the largest group for day centre places funded by local authorities and the second largest group in residential care. If person has profound disabilities, the NHS will look after them in residential care. The NHS also provides specialist help if someone with learning disabilities needs it.

The Government aims to help people with learning disabilities lead full lives in their communities, and only be admitted to hospital on health grounds. In local settings, social services work with the NHS, families, education and training services and voluntary groups to plan and provide a range of services.

*Help for families and children*

Social services have a duty to look after the welfare of any child in need. They either provide directly or arrange for a range of help to families in crisis. This includes advice, counselling, help in the home or access to family centres. Sometimes services are provide by voluntary groups, for example refuges which provide a safe base for women and children who suffer domestic violence.

If a child is considered at risk of neglect or of physical, mental or emotional abuse, he or she is placed on a child protection register so the situation can be monitored. At the end of March 1996 some 32,000 children were on registers. A number of agencies and professions - co-ordinated by area child protection committees - are responsible for children at risk.

Children whose parents are unable or unwilling to look after them are placed in the care of the local authority who act as the legal guardian. The law requires that whenever possible children should remain with their families. However, if they are likely to suffer significant harm at home, children can either be placed in the care of foster parents or in a children's home with others. Children's homes are run by local authorities, voluntary or private organisations.

In September 1998 the Government launched the Quality Protects programme, a three-year strategy underpinned by £375 million, to improve children's services and deliver nationally agreed outcomes for children in care.

6.4 Social Security

The Department of Social Security is the biggest spending department of government and a major pillar of the welfare state. It provides more than £92 billion of benefits to secure a basic standard of living for people who are retired, unemployed or cannot work, to provide help for families and with the costs of disablement. The social security system provides a minimum level of income below which no-one should fall if they are unable to work through their circumstances, unemployment, or disability. Social security provides cash benefits for children and families, unemployed people, disabled people and pensioners, including war pensioners.

The Government wants the welfare system wherever possible to help people towards independence, not to encourage dependence. The Government sums up its aims for social security like this: work for those who can; security for those who cannot. Later on this section describes the Government's plans for reform and the measures to help people into work.

How is social security funded?

All taxpayers, employers and employees contribute to the cost of social security. The programme has two sources of finance.

* The cost of contributory benefits and their administration is met from the National Insurance Fund, to which all employers and employees contribute. The Fund also has income from its investments.
* Non-contributory benefits and their administration are financed from general taxation.

General taxation provides more than half of social security income, National Insurance contributions from employers around a quarter and National Insurance contributions from employees about a fifth.

The total social security budget in 1997-1998 was more than £ 92 billion, which is almost a third of all government spending. The pie chart top left show how the budget was spent on people who received benefits for the year 1997-1998. The pie chart bottom left shows how the money was spent in terms of benefits for the same year.

*Benefits*

More than 20 million people receive some sort of benefit in Britain. The elderly and the short-term sick receive predominantly contributory benefits, unemployment people receive mainly income related benefits, families mainly other benefits while the long-term sick and disabled receive all three types of benefit.

*Benefits and who receives them*

Group Benefit

Elderly people Retirement Pension

Non-contributory Retirement Pension Christmas Bonus

The principal income-related benefits Winter Fuel Payment

Long-term sick and disabled people

Incapacity Benefit (long-term rate) Attendance Allowance

Disability Living Allowance Disability Working Allowance Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit Other Industrial Injuries Benefit Severe Disablement Allowance Invalid Care Allowance War Pensions Independent Living Fund Motability Christmas Bonus Principal income-related benefits Statutory Sick Pay Incapacity Benefit (short-term rate)

Families

Principal income-related benefits

Child Benefit

Family Credit Statutory Maternity Pay Maternity Allowance Maternity Grant

Principal income-related benefits

Unemployed people

Unemployment Benefit

Jobseeker's Allowance Principal income-related benefits Widows and others Widow's Benefits

War Widow's Pensions

Guardian Allowance and Child's Special

Allowance

Industrial Death Benefit

Social Fund Funereal Payments

Earnings Top-up Pilots

Income support paid to people who do not

fall within the other client groups

The Department of Social Security (DSS) comprises a small central headquarters which support the Secretary of State for Social Security and a team of Ministers in developing policy, and five executive agencies. Most of the services in Great Britain are run by the separate agencies.

Executive agencies of the DSS The Benefits Agency - pays most social security benefits The Child Support Agency - collects child maintenance from absent parents

The War Pensions Agency - administers benefits and delivers services for war pensioners and their dependants The Information Technology Agency - develops, implements and supports the IT system which now plays a major role in social security

In Northern Ireland the Social Security Agency administers contributions and benefits.

*Types of benefit*

There are three broad categories of social security benefit:

Contributory benefits, where entitlement depends on a person's record of National Insurance contributions. The main contributory benefits are Retirement Pension, Widow's Benefits, Incapacity Benefit and Jobseeker's Allowance. These account for half of social security spending.

Income-related benefit, for people whose income falls below a certain level, determined according to their family circumstances. These benefits take a person's capital well as their income into account. The income-related benefits are Income Support, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Disability Working Allowance, Family Credit and Earnings Top-up in certain pilot areas. These account for a third of social security spending.

Jobseeker's Allowance has both contributory and income-related components.

Other benefits depend on conditions such as disability or family needs. Benefits in this group include Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit, Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Severe Disablement Allowance and Child Benefit. These other, non-contributory benefits account for about a sixth of social security spending.

Since taking up office in May 1997 the Government has announced a number of wide-ranging reviews with the key objectives of tacking unemployment and social division which excludes people from playing a full part in their communities. The aims of the reviews are to:

* modernise the structure of social security and the way benefits are delivered to encourage financial independence and promote social cohesion
* make the welfare system active in supporting work, saving and honesty
* tackle social and economic inequalities.

*Welfare Reform*

Welfare reform is central to the Government's plans for the future development of Britain. Reform will tackle three key problems with the existing welfare system:

* inequality and social exclusion are worsening, especially among children and pensioners, despite rising spending on social security;
* people face a series of barriers to paid work, including financial disincentives; and
* fraud is taking money out of the system and away from genuine claimants.

Reform will be a long process, but the Government has already begun by publishing a Green Paper on Welfare Reform entitled New Ambitions for Our Country - A New Contract for Welfare. It sets out a number of key principles guiding welfare reform and includes a series of success measures to be achieved over the next 10 to 20 years. For example, by the end of the process of reform, the results that the Government expect to achieve include:

* a reduction in the proportion of working age people living in households where no-one works
* a guarantee of decent income in retirement for all
* a reduction in discrimination against people and an increase in the number of disabled people at work
* a rise in the proportion of parents meeting their financial obligations to children after separation
* a reduction in the amount of money lost in fraudulent payments.

**STUDY QUESTIONS:**

1. The National Health Service: What is the strength of the GP system?
2. What are the reasons for the steep rise in the cost of NHS?
3. What reforms did the Government introduce for hospitals, GPs and regional health authorities from 1990?
4. Compare the situation in Britain with that in Belarus from the point of view of availability of free medical treatment, provision of residential accomodation for the elderly, disabled and mentally ill.
5. Do you think that voluntary organizations in Britain which provide many forms of help allow the government to avoid its responsibilities?
6. Do you think that the British welfare state is successful in giving help to everybody who needs it? How many and what kinds of people "slip through the net" of care?
7. What are the main problems of the welfare state in modern Britain?