

General Certificate of Education
June 2003
Advanced Level Examination



GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
Unit 4 Comparative UK/USA Government

GOV4

Monday 23 June 2003 Morning Session

In addition to this paper you will require:
a 12-page answer book.

Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes

Instructions

- ∞ Use blue or black ink or ball-point pen. Pencil should only be used for drawing.
- ∞ Write the information required on the front of your answer book. The *Examining Body* for this paper is AQA. The *Paper Reference* is GOV4.
- ∞ Answer **Question 1** and **one** other question.

Information

- ∞ The maximum mark for this paper is 80.
- ∞ Mark allocations are shown in brackets.
- ∞ You will be assessed on your ability to use an appropriate form and style of writing, to organise relevant information clearly and coherently, and to use specialist vocabulary, where appropriate. The degree of legibility of your handwriting and the level of accuracy of your spelling, punctuation and grammar will also be taken into account.

Advice

- ∞ You are advised to spend approximately 10 minutes reading the examination paper before you attempt the questions.
- ∞ You are advised to spend the same amount of time on each question.

Answer **Question 1** and **one** other question.

1

Total for this question: 40 marks

Study the extract below and answer parts (a), (b) and (c) which follow.

POLITICAL CHANGE IN THE UK AND THE USA

The murder of 12 school children and a teacher at Columbine High School exposed the USA's permissive gun regime to international bewilderment. The policy response to such tragedies in the USA contrasts sharply with that of the UK where, after the Dunblane killings in 1996, the British government responded to public feeling and introduced legislation to tighten the gun regulations still further.

America remains unique among liberal democracies in that it is governed by a codified constitution designed for the 18th Century and it possesses the most heavily armed civilian population in the world. However, public pressure for gun control has rarely achieved policy changes and whilst over 20000 gun laws exist, mostly at state rather than federal level, their content is extremely weak.

Although President Clinton successfully lobbied the 103rd Democratic Congress to pass the Brady Bill, which established a 5-day waiting period before a gun could be bought, it was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in *Printz v United States* (1997).

In the UK, Parliament's taking away of the British common law right to firearms contrasts with the American right to bear arms guaranteed by the second amendment to the US constitution contained in the *Bill of Rights*. This amendment has never been incorporated to apply to state governments as well as the federal one. This means that state governments may pass strict gun control measures whilst the federal government may not, and under the tenth amendment, the federal government lacks the constitutional authority to force local officials to carry out federal policies. There are no such constitutional concerns in the UK's unitary state.

Passing new, tighter gun laws is very difficult in a federal system characterised by weak parties, and enforcement of existing legislation is also a problem when the courts can strike down laws as unconstitutional.

On gun policy, the UK and the USA remain very distant cousins.

Source: adapted from ROBERT SINGH, "Gun Politics in the USA and UK" in *Talking Politics*, Volume 12, No. 1 (Politics Association) Summer 1999

- (a) Using the extract, explain the term *Bill of Rights*. (8 marks)
- (b) Using the extract and your own knowledge, explain the difference between a federal and unitary state. (12 marks)
- (c) Consider reasons for the difficulty in bringing about political change in the USA compared with the UK. (20 marks)

Answer either **Question 2** or **Question 3** or **Question 4**.

- 2 “The Senate is too powerful and the House of Lords is too weak.” Consider this view of the upper chambers of the US Congress and the UK Parliament. *(40 marks)*
- 3 “The importance of the US Cabinet has been underestimated, whilst that of the UK Cabinet has been overestimated.” How far do you agree with this view? *(40 marks)*
- 4 “The greater political significance of the judiciary in the USA compared with the UK is due to its role as the interpreter of the constitution.” Discuss. *(40 marks)*

END OF QUESTIONS