

General Certificate of Education
January 2003
Advanced Level Examination



GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS **GOV8**
Unit 8 Government and Politics – Synoptic Module

Friday 31 January 2003 9.00 am to 11.00 am

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

Time allowed: 2 hours

Instructions

- Σ Use blue or black ink or ball-point pen. Pencil should only be used for drawing.
- Σ Write the information required on the front of your answer book. The *Examining Body* for this paper is AQA. The *Paper Reference* is GOV8.
- Σ Answer **both** the questions in **either** Section A **or** Section B **or** Section C **or** Section D.

Information

- Σ The maximum mark for this paper is 80.
- Σ Mark allocations are shown in brackets.
- Σ 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

- Σ You are advised to spend approximately 15 minutes reading the examination paper before you attempt the questions.
- Σ You are advised to spend the same amount of time on each question.

SECTION A: POWER

If you choose this Section, answer Question A1 **and** Question A2.

When answering the questions that follow you may wish to refer to the passage below but you do not have to do so. However, your answers must present material drawn from the range of your studies in Government and Politics.

- A1** “Power can corrupt – so one of the most important functions of a constitution is to place limits on the holders of state power.” Discuss. (40 marks)
- A2** “Even in the 21st century there are grounds for arguing that governments are dominated by small, exclusive elites.” Discuss. (40 marks)

Is There Still a Ruling Class?

The state elite consists of the positions of authority at the head of the leading institutions of the state. All developed societies have a state elite but not all societies will have a power elite. The occupants of the positions of state authority form a power elite only when they are recruited from a power bloc. This is an alignment of social groups having some similarity in social background and experience and able to monopolise positions of authority over a sustained period. The classical Marxian view of the ruling class assumed the existence of a highly exclusive power elite: the state machinery was supposed to be dominated by a single class with a high level of class consciousness and solidarity.

For example, in Britain, throughout the twentieth century, the proportion of cabinet ministers coming from a background of land, business, or the professions varied from 100 per cent at the beginning to something over three-quarters at the end. The leading private schools, where members of the capitalist class are disproportionately represented, and Oxford and Cambridge universities, also play their part in socialising the sons of the power elite and enhancing their movement into positions similar to those held by their fathers. The importance of private schooling in securing access to the state elite is apparent from the fact that virtually all cabinet members between 1951 and 1964 had been to private schools. By 1983, the private school representation in the Cabinet had fallen only slightly to just below three-quarters. In 1990, although prime minister Margaret Thatcher was the product of a state grammar school, she was one of only two members of her Cabinet not to have attended a fee-paying school, and sixteen had been to ‘Oxbridge’. The same situation holds for the top levels of the civil service and army as well as in the financial and business institutions. Hence, the evidence of social background and recruitment into the state elite shows clearly the persistence of a power bloc dominated by a capitalist class which is able to secure government policies which reflect its own interests.

Trades unions and the Labour Party have sought to represent working-class interests within the system and have, on occasion, been able to secure parliamentary majorities and form governments which introduce people from a wider social background. However, the entrenched position of the power elite in the non-elected parts of the state and the economy enables it to prevent Labour governments from using their power to make any substantial impact. Even New Labour can *govern*, but it cannot *rule*.

Source: adapted from J. SCOTT, Who Rules Britain? (Cambridge, Polity Press) 1991

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SECTION B: PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

If you choose this Section, answer Question B1 **and** Question B2.

When answering the questions that follow you may wish to refer to the passage below but you do not have to do so. However, your answers must present material drawn from the range of your studies in Government and Politics.

B1 “Modern political systems offer few opportunities for genuine participation by citizens.” Discuss. (40 marks)

B2 “Political parties make a mockery of representative democracy.” Discuss. (40 marks)

On Being an Independent MP

I am unique among MPs in that I can say when I don't know. I can say I've changed my mind and I can say I've made a mistake. That's what being independent is about. The mistakes I make are my own mistakes and they are not forced on me by a party whip. I don't belong to a party. I am the first independent MP on the mainland of Britain for fifty years.

I find the party system difficult. I do think there is a tendency now to be especially suspicious of political parties, not just in this country but in others. I believe their power has increased and ought to be diminished. To my mind there are too many obedient and servile party people not voting according to their consciences or the interests of their constituents, but doing what the party whips tell them. They even sometimes parrot questions that the party whips ask them to. You know, at Prime Minister's Question Time, when they get up and say, 'To what does my right Honourable Friend owe his extraordinary success and popularity?' That's such a waste of time. That's such a disgrace to democracy.

I have a theory that politicians, although called our representatives, are not representative of us. Of course, there are people in the House of Commons who are decent, honest, humble, working people of quiet achievement. My guess is that their proportion is much smaller in the House of Commons than it is in the community at large. And why? Because politics attracts driven individuals – risk takers – people who are willing to subordinate their home life, their principles and their constituents for a life climbing up the greasy pole of political ambition.

And as I look around me in the House of Commons, I notice a lot of younger MPs coming in there who haven't done anything else. They've got straight out of university, usually Oxford or Cambridge, and they've been practising in student union societies, which act as climbing frames for the main thing. Indeed, sometimes I think that the House of Commons is imitating the student union! You wonder what anybody believes in, what they know, and what they've done.

I have to say that being an independent MP is one of the best things that's ever happened to me – being MP for Tatton. When I went up to Westminster I thought I'd enjoy sitting on the green leather benches and be bored by the constituency work. That's nonsense. It's completely the reverse. ... cont. ...

The answer must lie in the people. They figure that MPs get into politics for what they can get out of it, not what they can put into it. I have no qualifications to be an MP, but people voted for me because they were angry and wanted a representative they wouldn't be ashamed of.

The government isn't the master of the people. Elected representatives are the servants of the people. They must never forget that. Yet they allow Parliament, which is our central democratic institution, to be increasingly sidelined. We now find that government proposals are announced first of all on morning radio, which is like a bulletin board for the ruling classes. What I am pleading for is a return to democracy. What we did at Tatton was a democratically inspired insurrection. Power to the people. In a system of representative government, power shouldn't lie with the party, it should lie with the people.

Source: adapted from MARTIN BELL, 'On being an independent MP', Talking Politics, Vol 13, No. 1 Summer 2000

TURN OVER FOR SECTION C

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SECTION C: POLITICAL CULTURE

If you choose this Section, answer Question C1 **and** Question C2.

When answering the questions that follow you may wish to refer to the passage below but you do not have to do so. However, your answers must present material drawn from the range of your studies in Government and Politics.

- C1** “Political culture sets the limits on what governments can achieve.” Discuss. (40 marks)
- C2** To what extent can deference be used to explain the relative stability of political systems that you have studied? (40 marks)

Deference in Question?

Over the years it has often been suggested by observers of British politics and society that the country exhibits a peculiarly ‘deferential’ political culture. Many analyses of voting behaviour have suggested that deferential attitudes may explain the apparently puzzling phenomenon of working-class Conservatism, and sociologists too have devoted considerable time and energy to studies of groups, such as farm workers or employees in small family-owned companies, whose behaviour and attitudes seem to result in a rather passive acceptance of their own subordination and lack of power. Such views of British political culture must be treated with some caution. Often we may find, for example, that the farm workers tugging at their forelocks with one hand may be giving the ‘V’ sign behind their backs with the other, and workers who vote Conservative may do so for a variety of reasons which have nothing to do with a belief in the political wisdom of their social superiors.

In the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher called for a return to ‘Victorian values’. In the 1990s, John Major issued a call to get ‘back to basics’. Neither of these initiatives had much impact, however, for the old moral certainties had long since been eroded. Religion and traditional education have been weakened and respect for the law has declined; old-style paternalism depends on a culture of deference and respect for hierarchy that has all but disappeared. Although nationalism remains strong, potent symbols of national unity – in particular, the Royal Family – have lost much of the aura and respect that once surrounded them. Just as members of one class no longer defer to those in another so, too, women no longer defer to men and young people no longer defer to their elders. However, Britain still remains a relatively stable society.

Source: adapted from J. DEARLOVE and P. SAUNDERS, *Introduction to British Politics* 2nd edition, (Cambridge, Polity Press) 1991 and J. DEARLOVE and P. SAUNDERS, *Introduction to British Politics* 3rd edition, (Cambridge, Polity Press) 2000

SECTION D: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

If you choose this Section, answer Question D1 **and** Question D2.

When answering the questions that follow you may wish to refer to the passage below but you do not have to do so. However, your answers must present material drawn from the range of your studies in Government and Politics.

- D1** “Changes within a political system are often more apparent than real.” Discuss. (40 marks)
- D2** “Political factors make rational reform of the machinery of government extremely difficult.” Discuss. (40 marks)

Politics and Administrative Reform

The departmental pattern reflects political considerations. A new department, for example, may reflect policy changes (e.g. the Northern Ireland Office, created in 1972 after ‘direct rule’ was introduced); new problems (e.g. the Energy Department, created in 1974 following the fuel crises); reassurance that ‘something is being done’ about pressing issues (e.g. re-creation of the Department of Health in 1988); or an attempt to appeal to important electoral or client groups (e.g. the Welsh Office, created in 1964). Short-term political factors (e.g. the need to accommodate a particular politician) often take precedence over administrative considerations. Because of such influences, the departmental pattern may become untidy, but most prime ministers apparently feel that political image is more important than administrative considerations. Consequently, while long-overdue administrative reforms might be ignored, political changes may produce sudden and frequent alterations to the departmental pattern.

Nevertheless, the gradualness of Britain’s historical development has sustained considerable continuity. Several current departments (e.g. Home Office, Treasury) predate modern government, while others (e.g. Education) originated in Victorian times.

Source: adapted from J. GREENWOOD, R. PYPER, and D. WILSON, *New Public Administration in Britain* (Routledge) 2002

END OF QUESTIONS