

M O N I T O R

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The Constitution Unit Bulletin

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Labour's second term agenda

Labour's constitutional reform programme was the major achievement of their first term. But the constitutional reform programme is not complete. Ahead of the election, the Constitution Unit has produced three briefings which cover Labour's second term agenda. And over the page is a summary of William Hague's most recent commitments (p. 2).

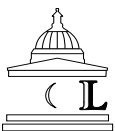
The first briefing *Unfinished Business* summarises Labour's commitments to constitutional reforms in the second term. It takes as its starting point Labour's known commitments on the second stage of Lords reform; regional government in England; electoral reform for the House of Commons; and the referendum on the Euro. The briefing then analyses how and when these reforms can be implemented.

The referendum on the Euro is the biggest change, and the one to which the government will give priority. If the referendum is held in summer or autumn 2002, and is carried, Euro notes and coins could be introduced in 2004/5, in advance of the next election.

Giving priority to the followed by legislation in the next Parliament (2005-2010) for directly elected Regional Assemblies. cont. p. 2

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Devolution Monitoring Reports



The March 2000 quarterly reports are now available covering devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the English regions. If you want to have these reports emailed to you as soon as they are published, instead of looking for them on our website, contact Gareth Lewes (g.lewes@ucl.ac.uk).

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Northern Ireland

Talks between the Northern Ireland parties and the London and Dublin Governments on the (final) implementation of the Belfast agreement have laboured to no particular conclusion. This despite a huge investment by the outgoing US president, Bill Clinton, seeking to secure his place in history. The 'dreary steeples' of decommissioning, policing and security normalisation remained stubbornly erect.

Not only were moves towards a more peaceful environment thus stymied; even more troublingly, Catholics faced an increasingly vicious campaign of sectarian attacks. And the deadlock disrupted the work of the intergovernmental institutions, the North/South Ministerial Council - even though here useful work was quietly done - and the British-Irish Council.

More successful than the US president's trip was that by the first and deputy first minister to meet the French president, Jacques Chirac. Their planned meeting with the German chancellor,

Hammersmith & Fulham are all considering a scheme, the only local authorities committed to referendums are Lewisham, Brighton and Hove, and Berwick-on-Tweed. Berwick is the only district council and the only local authority where a petition from 5% of the population triggered the reform proposal. However, regulations permitting the referendums have not

donations and election spending, has started work. Its six members, of whom only the Chairman is full time, were approved by the Commons on 10 January, for varying terms of between 4-6 years. Whittled down from 223 applications, the six are: Sam Younger (Chairman), Pamela Gordon, Sir Neil McIntosh, Glyn Mathias, Karamjit Singh and Graham Zellick. The Chief Executive is Roger Creedon, seconded from the Home Office. The rules covering party and election funding came into

commission is not to be expected in the near future.

Freedom of Information

Publication Schemes

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 became law on 30 November. In March the Home Office will announce the implementation timetable. First in line are government departments, who have just over a year to prepare.

Their first task is to prepare publication schemes, which set out all the information which the authority will publish or make available as a matter of course. These must be approved by the new Information Commissioner, Liz France. Jim Amos and Dick Baxter from the Constitution Unit are working with her staff and pilot public authorities in producing model publication schemes. See: www.dataprotection.gov.uk.

Handling FOI Requests

The second task is to put in place systems for handling requests. The Home Of6 499. are. 0.2068 Tna9te Homee

The Commons: Reform or Modernisation

This new briefing, by Commons Clerk Andrew Kennon, looks back at reform over the Labour government's first term. The new government came to power having made many commitments

Secretary: if not now, then once the Welsh Assembly has been granted legislative powers. Northern Ireland is likely to remain a special case, requiring a separate Minister.

A merged 'Secretary of State for the Union' could take a more strategic and forward looking view, and lead government thinking on the unresolved issues of devolution: including finance, representation at Westminster and the English Question. A combined Minister could also be a 'constitutional reform supremo' with overall responsibility for the constitution, taking a synoptic and strategic view, while still leaving the policy lead with individual Whitehall departments.

The briefing is now available (see publications list for details). Contact: *Robert Hazell*, 020 7679 4971, r.hazell@ucl.ac.uk.

A Parliament to be Proud of?

The first audit of the Scottish Parliament, in the Unit's *Breaking the Westminster Mould* project, will be published shortly. *Realising the Vision: A Parliament to be Proud of?* has been written by Barry Winetrobe, who was a senior researcher in parliamentary and constitutional issues at the House of Commons Research Service. In 1999 he was seconded to Edinburgh to work with the Scottish Parliament prior to its establishment and during its fi.6(0.0-'con.4(e)1.te p)s ic(r)10.3n9(HtHt 4.4((t8h)-1.8(t)1es9n468h 5eTw[(theg)10.9]TJi(r)-4.4(.

Bulletin Board

Forthcoming Unit Events

To book a free place at Unit events, please return the events flyer enclosed. A location map for the Constitution Unit can be found at: www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/logos/find.htm

Seminar: What Works and Doesn't Work in London's New Assembly?

Trevor Phillips: Chair of the Greater London Assembly
16 March 2001, 1.00-2.30 p.m., The Constitution Unit,
(sandwiches available from 12.30)

CAPITA and the Constitution Unit

Conference: The Challenge of Freedom of Information: Are You Prepared?

25 April 2001: central London venue
Contact: Elizabeth Moyle, (CAPITA), tel: 020 7222 4952,
email: moylee@capitagroup.co.uk

Seminar: The Ways Forward for Regional Government in England

Lord Dearing: Chairman of the LGA Hearing on the Regions
20 April 2001, 1.00-2.30 p.m., The Constitution Unit,
(sandwiches available from 12.30)

Seminar: Challenges facing the UK's new Electoral Commission: Lessons from Overseas

Dr Jeremy Mitchell: Department of Government, Open University
18 May 2001, 1.00-2.30 p.m., The Constitution Unit,
(sandwiches available from 12.30)

Future Events

Political Economy Research Centre

Conference: Multi-level Governance: An Interdisciplinary Perspective

28-30 June 2000, University of Sheffield
contact: Sylvia McColm, PERC, University of Sheffield,
+44 (0)114 222 0660, S.McColm@sheffield.ac.uk

Useful Websites

Electoral Commission:

www.electoralcommission.gov.uk

Information Commissioner:

www.dataprotection.gov.uk

Home Office FOI Code of Practice:

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/foi

FOI Records Management:

www.pro.gov.uk/recordsmanagement

Daily Bulletin: www.ePolitix.com

New Publications by the Unit

Please refer to the Unit's order form for further details:

- *Three into One Won't Go: The Future of the Territorial Secretaries of State*, by Robert Hazell, Constitution Unit briefing (March 2001) £5.
- *Unfinished Business: Labour's Constitutional Agenda for the Second Term*, by Robert Hazell, Constitution Unit briefing (Mar 2001) £5.
- *Lessons from Britain's PR Elections* by Ben Seyd, John Curtice,

