



Foundations of the UK's Government

United Kingdom Overview

- Tradition of Democracy
 - Evolutionary to the current state of an Advanced Democracy
- Parliamentary Democracy
 - Unitary – Monarchy official head of UK
 - Federalist – Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland all have national assemblies
- Constitutional Monarchy
 - Executive Chief of State – Queen
 - De Facto head of Government – Prime Minister
 - Bi-cameral legislature - House of Commons and House of Lords
 - Judicial - Supreme Court



Geographic Issues

- United Kingdom ruled by England
 - Center of wealth and population
 - Movements of devolution
 - Wales, Scotland, and Ireland pushing for greater independence
- Question of status in Europe
 - British exceptionalism – Feeling of being European, but not
 - Less risk of invasion
 - More culture homogeneity



Legitimacy Through Tradition

- Government maintains legitimacy through tradition
 - Existed in form since 927
- Power derived through crown and Rational Legal Authority
 - No formal constitution
 - **Common Law** - allows the decisions that public officials and courts make to set precedents for later actions and decisions, eventually forming a comprehensive set of principles for governance

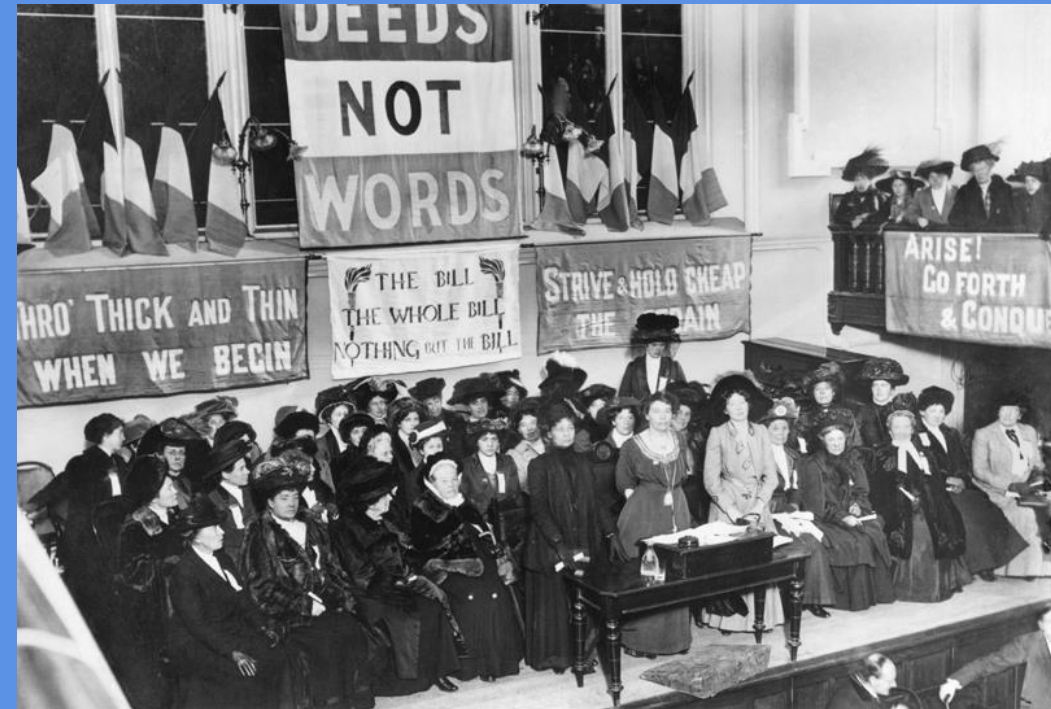


Democratization of Britain – The Monarchy

- Magna Carta(1215) – King John agreed to consult the nobles before he made important decisions, in particular regarding taxes
 - Began process of attempting to limited government
- English Civil War (1640s) – Civil war between Monarchists and Parliamentarians
- The Glorious Revolution (1688) – officially established Parliament as the ruling body of Great Britain
 - Agreement between King and Parliament called “Bill of Rights”

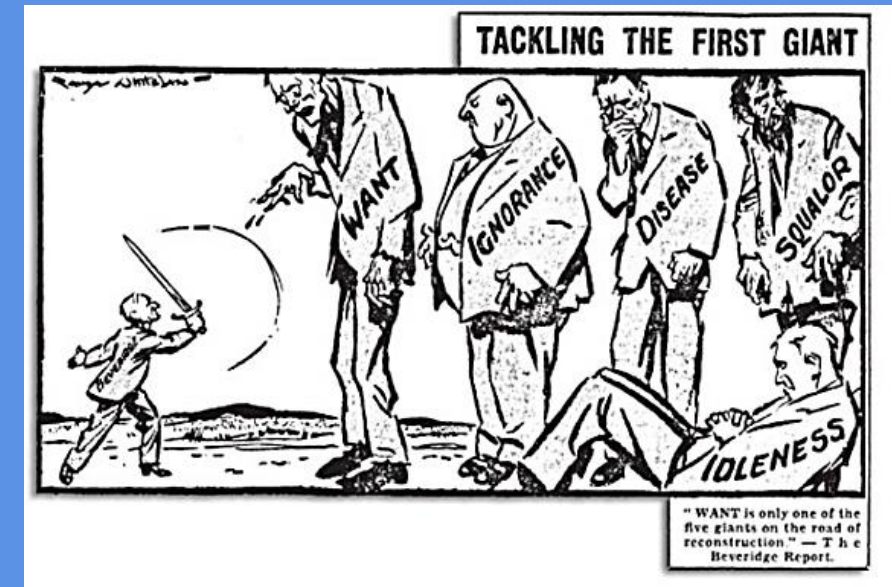
Democratization of Britain - Industrialization

- Gradualism – Gradual rise of parliament and the extension of government participation
- Industrial Revolution (18th-19th Century) shifts center of economy to cities
- Great Reform Acts (1832, 1867, 1884) – Extends the right to vote to landowning men, urban men, and eventually rural men
 - Women mostly get franchise in 1918 (28+), All women by 1928 (21+), lower age in 1969 (18+)
- Noblesse Oblige – Idea that wealthy should watch over lower classes



Modern Developments – Post-War Era

- Collective Consensus – All-party coalition developed during World War II in order to defeat Nazi Germany
 - **Beveridge Report** – adopted by both parties during the war made all citizens eligible for health, unemployment, pension, and other welfare benefits
- Welfare State – Seen as extension of collective consensus
 - Set of public policies designed to provide for citizens' needs through provision of pensions, health care, unemployment insurance, & assistance to the poor
 - Included creation of National Health Service (1948)



Modern Developments - Thatcherism

- Rise of Neo-Liberalism
 - Revival of classic liberal values that promote free competition among businesses within the market, including reduced gov't regulation & social spending
 - In response to economic stagnation
- Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990)
 - Conservative Party
 - Privatized British industries
 - Cut social programs
 - Reliance on Free market
 - Reduced government controls
 - Limited role of Labor Unions



Modern Developments – New Labour Party

- Developed in 1990s under Prime Minister Tony Blair as the “Third Way”
 - Political Left’s shift to center
- Attempting to redefine and balance following policy issues:
 - Evolving relationship between government & economy
 - British relationship with EU
 - Balancing act between the United States and European Union
 - Devolution



Modern Developments – Conservative-Liberal Coalition

- David Cameron (Conservative Party, PM 2010 - 2016)
 - Took party in more mainstream direction
 - Tories now control Government
- 2010 Election – Hung Parliament
 - When no party has a majority of seats in Parliament
 - Led to Conservative- Liberal Democrat coalition
- “Big Society”
 - Wide-ranging initiatives to empower ordinary citizens to take control over their lives
 - Shift power downward from state to communities/citizens
- “Austerity”
 - Series of sustained reductions in public spending
 - Aimed at reducing welfare state & reducing deficits
 - Affected NHS, welfare, education