

Rubber stamp (politics)

A **rubber stamp**, as a political metaphor, refers to a person or institution with considerable *de jure* power but little *de facto* power; one that rarely or never disagrees with more powerful organs.^[1]

In situations where this superior official's signature may frequently be required for routine paperwork, a literal rubber stamp is used, with a likeness of their hand-written signature. In essence, the term is meant to convey an endorsement without careful thought or personal investment in the outcome, especially since it is usually expected as the stamper's duty to do so. In the situation where a dictator's legislature is a "rubber stamp", the orders they are meant to endorse are formalities they are expected to legitimize, and are usually done to create the superficial appearance of legislative and dictatorial harmony rather than because they have actual power.

Historian Edward S. Ellis called this type of legislature a **toy parliament**, with specific reference to Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II's General Assembly of the Ottoman Empire, created in 1876 with the sole purpose of appeasing the European powers. One of the most famous example of a rubber stamp institution is the Reichstag of Nazi Germany, which unanimously confirmed all decision already made by Adolf Hitler and the highest-ranking members of the Nazi Party. Many legislatures of authoritarian countries are considered as rubber stamps, such as communist parliaments like the Chinese National People's Congress, or the Italian Chamber of Fasci and Corporations during the Fascist regime.

During the reign of Adolf Frederick, King of Sweden (1751–71), the Riksdag of the Estates had the power to sign binding documents with a literal name stamp, sometimes against the will of the king who by law was an absolute monarch.

Conversely, in a constitutional monarchy, the monarch is typically a "rubber stamp" to an elected parliament, even if he or she legally possesses considerable reserve powers or disagrees with the parliament's decisions. In parliamentary republics such as India, the President is often described as a rubber stamp.

References

- Webster's New World Dictionary, Second College Edition, ISBN 0-671-41809-2 - page 1242 - ''rubber-stamp 2. [Colloq.] to approve or endorse in a routine manner, without thought - ''rubber stamp - 2. [Colloq.] a) a person, bureau, legislature, etc., that approves or endorses something in a routine manner, without thought, b) any routine approval"

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