



INSTITUTIONS AND LONDON

CM GÉO ÉCO LEA1 SEMESTRE 2 2019-2020

M. BOURDEAU – UJML3

2. London and British Institutions



Contents

- 1a. Westminster & Main Political Parties
- 2. Whitehall
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1a. Westminster

- London borough
 - west central London
 - the Houses of Parliament
 - Buckingham Palace
- The two Houses of Parliament themselves
- The parliamentary system known as the Westminster model



Westminster Model

The Westminster System - Public Service Commission". www.psc.nsw.gov.au.

- ▶ A head of state: the monarch
- ▶ A head of Government: the Prime Minister
- ▶ An elected Parliament, with one or two Houses
- ▶ Separation of powers between the three branches of government:
 - ▶ The **Legislature** (Parliament)
 - ▶ The **Executive**
 - ▶ The **Judiciary**

► Constitutional monarchy?

Constitution: the body of doctrines and practices that form the fundamental organizing principle of a political state.

► British constitution?

- Unwritten?
- Actually uncodified
- Magna Carta (1215)
- Bill of Rights (1689)
- + customs, tradition and precedents (case law)



Having a comprehensive, written Constitution like 99% of countries

Having tons of documents and "conventions" which we'll call "the British Constitution"

- ▶ The sovereign reigns but does not rule.
- ▶ Monarch is ‘advised’ by the government
 - ▶ Opens parliamentary session
 - ▶ Dissolves parliament
- ▶ Bill -> law : Approval of the Queen, **House of Commons** and the **House of Lords** required.
- ▶ In practice, parliament is supreme.
 - ▶ Royal assent= automatic

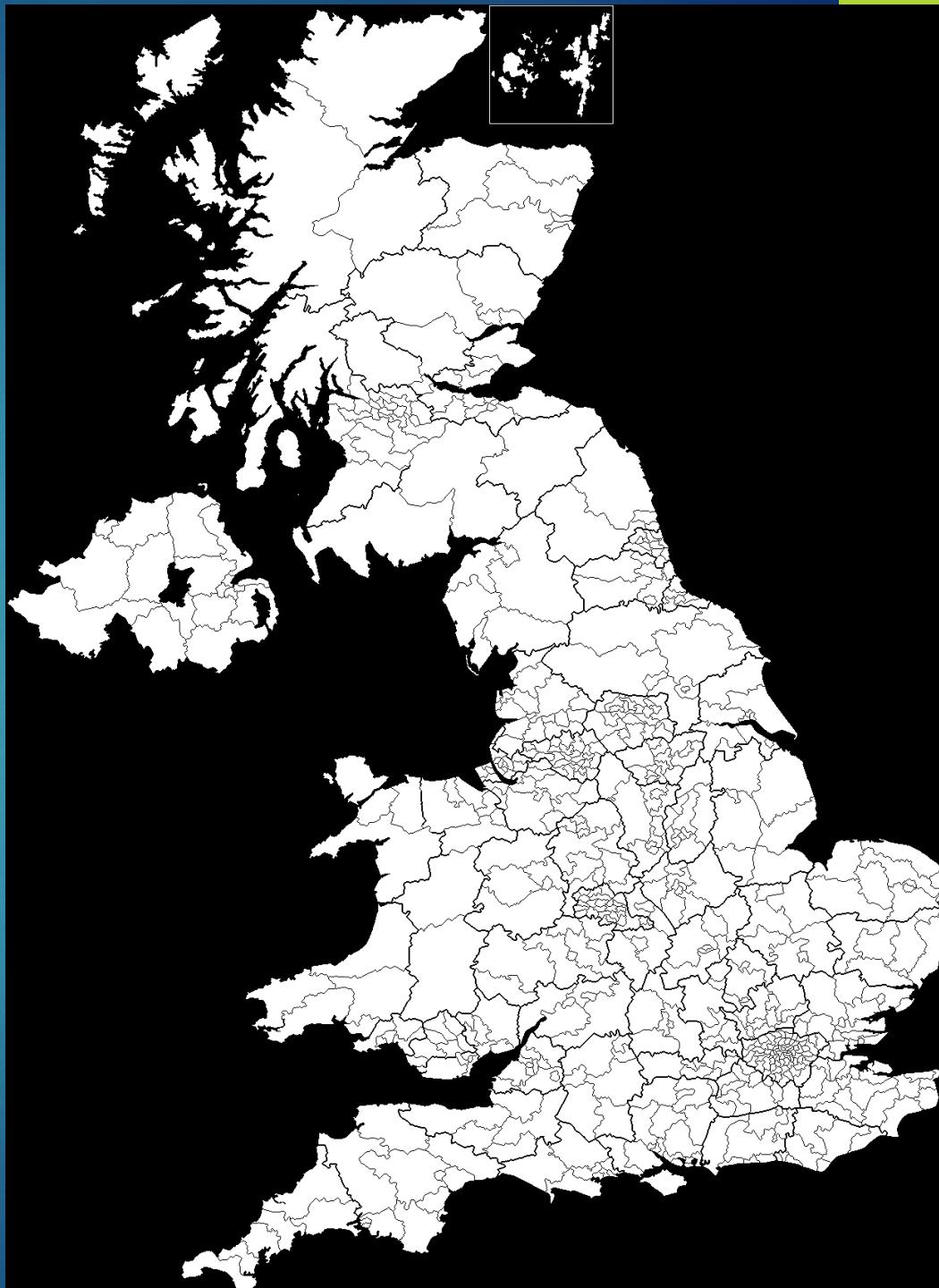


Legislative power

- ▶ Bicameral legislature.
- ▶ **House of Commons** (lower chamber)
- ▶ **House of Lords** (upper chamber).



- **House of Commons** (lower chamber)
- ▶ **650 Members of Parliament (MPs)**
- ▶ Elections:
 - ▶ Every 5 years
 - ▶ 1 MP/ constituency
 - ▶ First-past-the-post system





French Assemblée Nationale

VS. British House of Commons

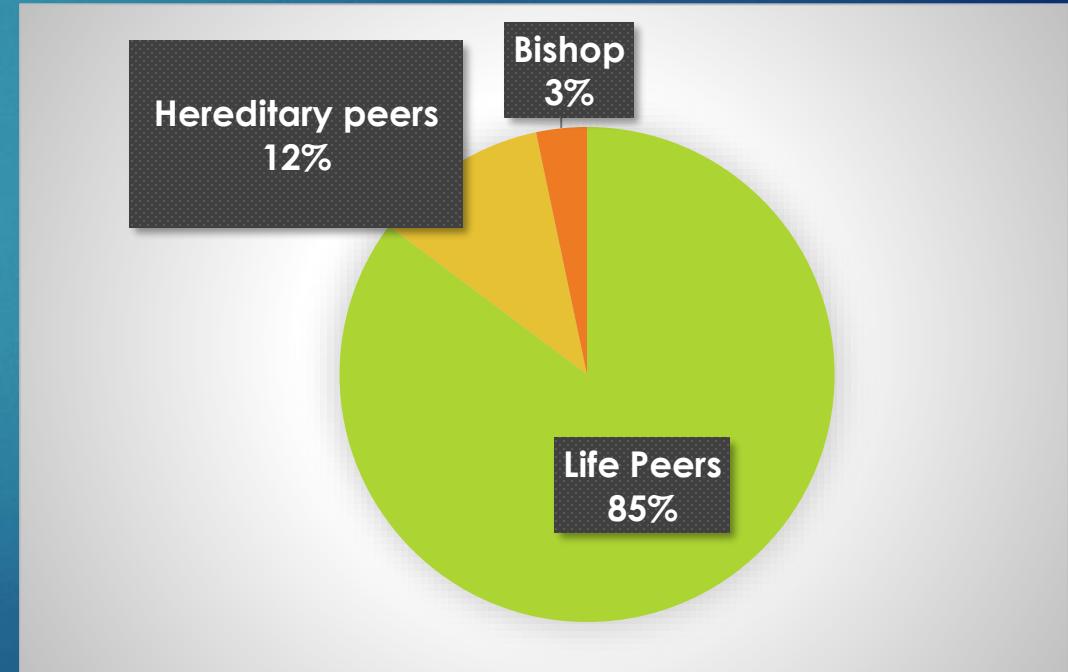


The UK = a two-party system? Historically yes; now a bit more nuanced

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House of Lords

- ▶ Not elected!
- ▶ Inherit the title from your parent = **hereditary peers**
- ▶ House of Lords Act of 1999
 - ▶ 1,330 Lords => ~ 760.
 - ▶ Most lords now appointed by the Prime Minister /House of Lords appointment commission = **life peers**
- ▶ Bishops (26)



1b. Main Political Parties in Britain

- ▶ The English parliament = oldest in the world (**1265**)
- ▶ Before the late 17th century, no political parties (members of parliament = aristocrats and wealthy men)
- ▶ Exclusion Crisis (1679-1681) divided Parliament => most members formed into two parties, the **Whigs** and the **Tories**.

Tories

Rural areas

Strong monarch

Defense of royal absolutism

Passive obedience, no resistance

Whigs

Urban areas

Strong legislative power

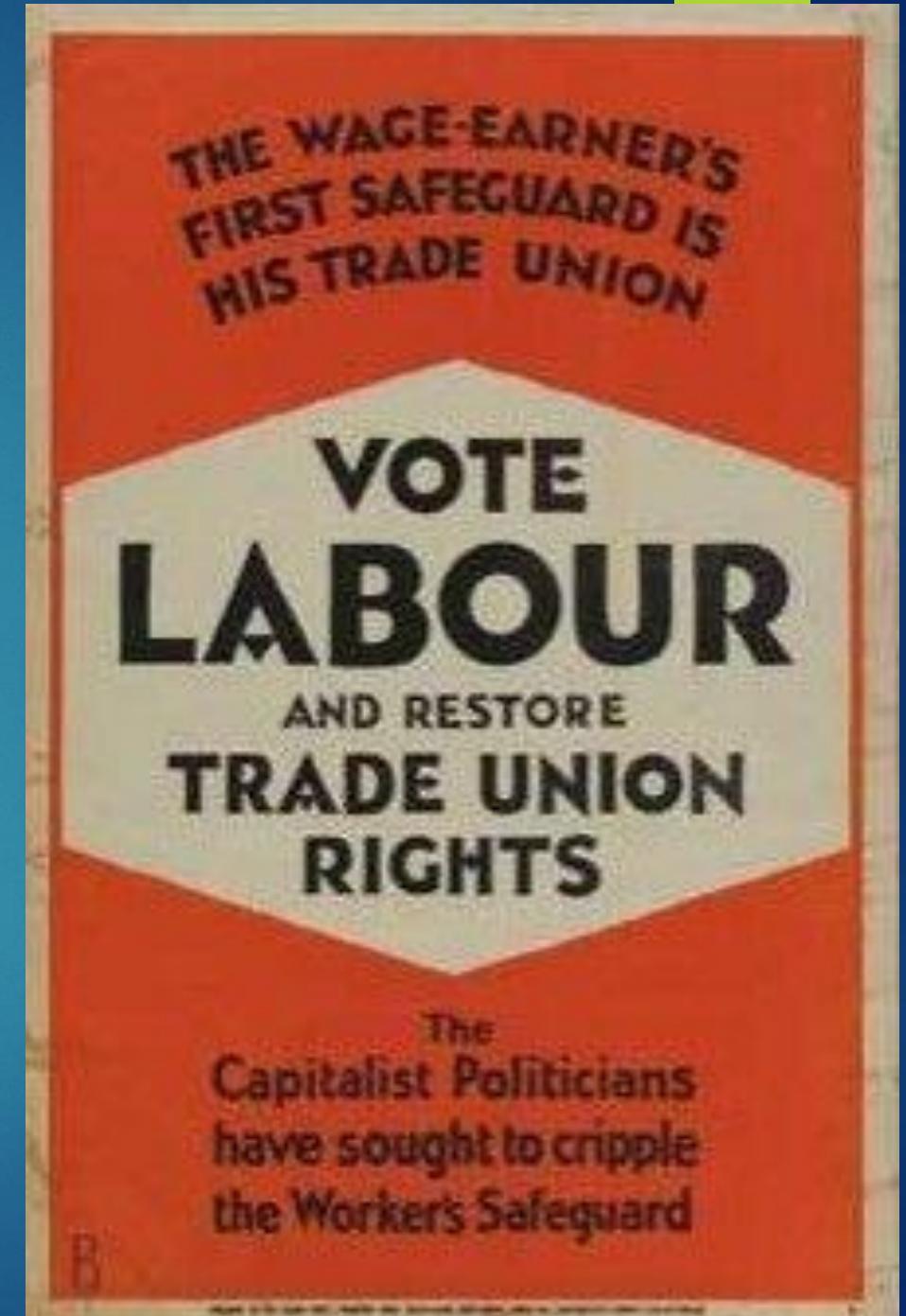
Defense of Parliament power

Resistance, right to overthrow ruler

- ▶ The Whigs = liberal and reforming aristocracy.
 - ▶ 1850s: the **Whig Party** => the **Liberal Party**.
 - ▶ 1989: the Liberal Party => **Liberal Democrats**.
-
- ▶ **Tories** = supporters of strong royal power, i.e. monarchists and traditionalists.
 - ▶ 1834: the **Tory Party** = the **Conservative Party**



- ▶ After WWI = Labour Party.
- ▶ 1929: Labour first majority.
= took over the Liberals as alternative to Conservatives
- ▶ Rise of Labour = consequence of major changes in society at the time
- ▶ After that, 2 (3?) main parties and not much change on the political stage in the 20th /early 21st centuries



► Conservative (and unionist) Party

- British Party of the right
- Free market
- Law & order /Moral values (family and work)
- Headed by Boris Johnson since July 2019
- Some major differences of opinions : wide political scope
 - Neoliberalists vs social conservatists
 - Eurosceptic vs Eurofriendly



Labour Party

- ▶ Left wing politics (socialism / link with trade unions)
- ▶ **Tony Blair's** leadership (1997-2007) = centre-left (**New Labour**).
- ▶ **Jeremy Corbyn** (2015-2020) = return to core leftist, socialist values.
- ▶ **Keir Starmer** (2020-?) = 'soft left' / 'red-green' Labour



Liberal Democrats (or Lib Dems)

- ▶ party of the centre
- ▶ Most pro-European
- ▶ 2010-2015: coalition with the Conservatives (Nick Clegg)
- ▶ Co-headed by Ed Davey since August 2020



Pre 2016 : Controversy over immigration =>
Rise of the **UK Independence Party (UKIP)**

Political programme
besides EU-bashing
and xenophobia = ??



UKIP & Post-Brexit referendum :

- Nigel Farage out
(Current leader : Neil Hamilton, by interim)
- Huge party crisis
- 0.1% votes in the Dec 2019 General election = lowest rate ever



2. Whitehall

- ▶ Whitehall = name of a street, south of Trafalgar Square
- ▶ Refers to the British government / executive power
- ▶ 10 Downing Street



► Prime Minister = head of the government ("Ministry")

► Appointed by the sovereign

► Appoints:

- 22 senior ministers (= the Cabinet)
- 98 junior ministers
- = 120 ministers



Members of the government & PM = necessarily elected MPs.

- ▶ Front-benchers
- ▶ Back benchers



3. The City

= Financial district of London, located in the 'Square Mile'



History



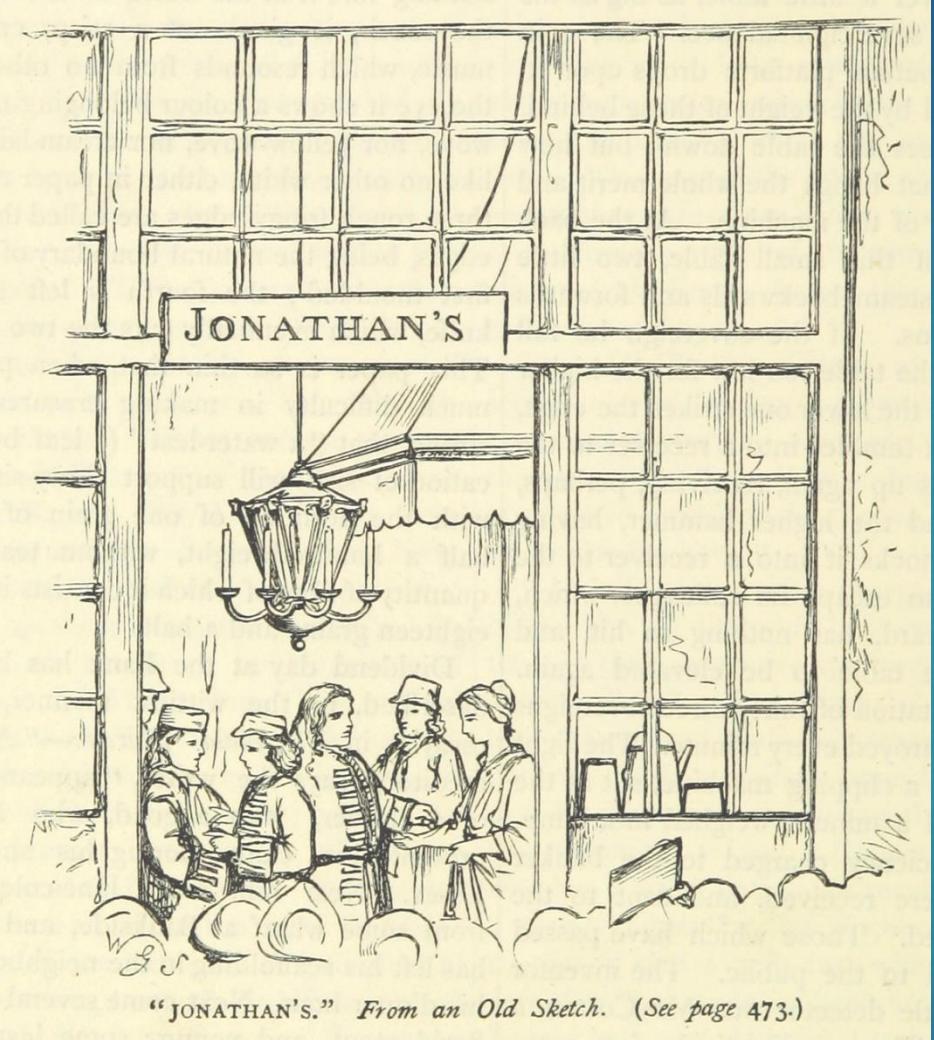
Established in around AD50
Londinium
Geographically strategic
Commerce and trade
Guilds



Early 17th century =

- > Guilds + major trade companies (ex the East India Company) had headquarters there.
- > Tradesmen gathered in coffee houses => gradually became financial institutions





Jonathan's Coffee House =>
London Stock Exchange



Lloyd's coffee => Lloyd's of London

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1694: founding of the Bank of England to regulate exchanges

1773 = “The Stock Exchange” coined.

1801 = official creation of the London Stock Exchange

1986: ‘Big Bang’: huge deregulation & structural/technological changes

Late 20th / early 21st = New York took over London as financial ‘capital’ of the world

The fourth power: the Press (‘Fleet Street’)

- ▶ HQ of the British national Press since 16th century



Tabloids

Mostly working class readership
Selling sensational “news”
Poor quality press

The Sun, The Daily Mail, The Daily Mirror

vs.

Broadsheets

Middle class readership
Reporting about current topics & issues
Good quality press

The Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian

Broadsheet (quality press)

The front page of the Daily Mirror features several large headlines and images. At the top left is a large white 'M' on a red background. The main title 'DAILY Mirror' is in large white letters, with 'REAL NEWS... REAL ENTERTAINMENT' and '45p' below it. To the right, a headline reads 'SPURS ACE IN HORROR BIKE CRASH' above a photo of a man. Below that is another photo of a woman with the caption 'We are scared of Katie' and 'TM & CELEB SHOCK PARK'. To the right of the woman's photo is a photo of a damaged car and motorcycle. The central part of the page has a large photo of Daniel Radcliffe with the headline 'Dopey Daniel Radcliffe smokes spliff at party' and 'EXCLUSIVE'. To the right of the photo is a smaller photo of Daniel Radcliffe. The bottom half of the page has a large, stylized photo of Daniel Radcliffe's face with the headline 'HARRY POTHEAD' in large, bold, black letters.

Tabloids (popular press)

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