



Otázka: The system of Government and political parties in the UK

Jazyk: Angličtina

Přidal(a): Narissel

In the UK

The history of the UK has been very different from most other nations and, as a result, its political system is very different from most other nations too.

The United kingdom consists of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The southern (Catholic) Irish never wanted to be ruled by the English and rebelled in 1916 and gained independence in 1922. The northern (Protestant) Irish did not want independence and so the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland arrived.

HOW HISTORY HAS SHAPED THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

The Bill of Rights of 1689 – which is still in effect – lays down limits on the powers of the crown and sets out the rights of Parliament and rules for freedom of speech in Parliament, the requirement for regular elections to Parliament, and the right to petition the monarch without fear of retribution.

The year 2015 was a special year for the British Parliament as it was the 750th anniversary of the de Montfort Parliament, along with the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta.

THREE ARMS OF THE STATE

The British political system is headed by a monarchy but essentially the powers of the monarch as head of state – currently Queen Elizabeth II – are ceremonial. Although any remaining powers of the monarchy are largely ceremonial, the Royal Family does have some subtle and hidden influence on the legislative process because of a little-known provision that senior royals have to be consulted about legislation that might affect their private interests and given the opportunity to have such legislation Agreed to.

In classical political theory, there are three arms of the state:

- **The executive** – the executive power – prime minister and his cabinet –
Since 13 July 2016, Theresa May is the current prime minister of the UK. She is leader of the Conservative Party. As a prime minister she is the head of the UK Government and is responsible for policy and decisions of the government.
- **The legislature** – the legislative power – parliament – the House of Commons and the House of Lords
- **The judiciary** – the judicial power – the judges and the courts who ensure that everyone obeys the laws.

In the UK all Ministers in the government are members of the legislature and one individual, the Lord Chancellor, is actually a member of all three arms.

THE U.K. PARLIAMENT

The main functions of the UK parliament are to make and change laws, check and challenge the work of the Government, debate the important issues of the day, check and approve Government spending budget or taxes.

The British Parliament is often called Westminster because it is housed in a building in central London called the Palace of Westminster. The British Parliament is bicameral, that is there are two houses or chambers.



The House of Commons

This is the lower chamber but the one with the most authority. The Commons is chaired by the Speaker, the post is non-political. The House of Commons currently comprises 650 Members of Parliament. There is insufficient seating capacity in the chamber of the House of Commons. Members do not sit at desks but on long, green-covered benches and there is only seating capacity for 437 People out of the total of 650. Every citizen aged 18 or over can vote once in the constituency in which they live.

The House of Lords

This is the upper chamber but the one with less authority. Its main roles are to revise legislation and keep a check on Government by scrutinising its activities. The House of Lords is an utterly bizarre institution that has no parallel anywhere in the democratic world. The explanation for the unusual nature of the Lords goes can be found in the History of the UK: the British political system has evolved very slowly and peacefully and it is not totally logical or democratic.

There is no fixed number of members in the House of Lords, but currently there are 826 members – many more than in the House of Commons. Historically most members of the House of Lords have been what we called hereditary peers. This meant that years ago a king or queen nominated a member of the aristocracy to be a member of the House and, since then, the right to sit in the House has passed through the family from generation to generation. There are also life peers. Life peers are appointed members whose titles cannot be taken away.

There is no retirement age. Members do not sit at desks but on long, red-covered benches and there is only seating capacity for 230 Members out of the total of 774.

POLITICAL PARTIES

The idea of political parties first took form in Britain and the Conservative Party claims to be the oldest political party in the world.

Today there are four major political parties in the British parliamentary system:



- **The Conservative Party** – the centre-Right party, Their policies usually promote conservatism and British Unionism. *The conservatives (symbol a scribbly tree – oak tree) represent interests of Professional people and managers in business and industry.*
- **The Labour Party** – the centre-Left party, they stand mostly for social justice, strong community and strong values, reward for hard work, rights matched by responsibilities.
- **The Scottish National Party** – the left party supporting Scottish independence
- **The Liberal Democrat Party** – the centrist, libertarian party

Each political party chooses its leader in a different way, but all involve all the Members of Parliament of the party and all the individual members of that party. The leader of the political party with the largest number of members in the House of Commons becomes the Prime Minister.

Political parties are an all-important feature of the British political system because:

- The three main UK political parties in the UK have existed for a century or more and have a strong and stable 'brand image'.
- It is virtually impossible for someone to be elected to the House of Commons without being a member of an established political party.
- All political parties strongly 'whip' their elected members which means that, on the vast majority of issues, Members of Parliament of the same party vote as a 'block'.

The monarch

The current queen of the UK is Elizabeth II. She has been Queen of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand since 6 February 1952.

Although the queen is no longer responsible for governing the country, she carries out many important tasks.

As head of state, the Queen goes on official State visits abroad. She also invites other world



leaders to come to the UK.

The Queen is also the head of the Armed Forces. She is the only person who can declare when the country is at war and when war is over, although she must take advice from her government first.

The queen is head of Church of England – every monarch since Henry VIII has held this position. The queen appoints archbishops and bishops on the advice of prime minister.

Every day „red boxes“ are delivered to the queen. They are full of documents and reports from ministers and Commonwealth officials. They must all be read and, if necessary, signed by the queen.

The queen represents the nation at times of great celebration or sorrow. One example is Remembrance day ceremony at the monument in whitehall.