

# Ministers, Departments, Civil Servants

The Political System of the United Kingdom

Intro

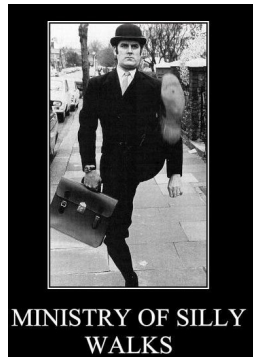
Ministers and Departments

Co-Dependency

A Minister's Roles

The Changing Civil Service

Conclusion



## Last Week's Remaining Question

- ▶ What alternative methods are available to curtail Prime Ministerial power?

## Current Events

- ▶ Cameron threatens to kick out ministers/(party members) who campaign for the “no” side
- ▶ ...

# Today: Ministers, Departments, Civil Servants

- ▶ Recent debates focused on PM (is she/he like a president)
- ▶ PM clearly dependent on other players within cabinet, parliament, departments, party
- ▶ But: Even if PM more powerful, just one vertex of the core executive triangle
- ▶ Today: Focus on Minister  $\leftrightarrow$  Civil Servant edge



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- ▶ PM clearly dependent on other players within cabinet, parliament, departments, party
- ▶ But: Even if PM more powerful, just one vertex of the core executive triangle
- ▶ Today: Focus on Minister  $\leftrightarrow$  Civil Servant edge
- ▶ Who is in charge: The Minister or Sir Humphrey? (clip)





## Recap: The Westminster Model

- ▶ Parliament is sovereign
- ▶ Ministers are accountable to Parliament
- ▶ Civil Servants neutral and loyal to ministers
- ▶ Policy-making power located in the executive
- ▶ Government serves the public
- ▶ The system of decision-making is secret
- ▶ Civil Servants advise, ministers decide

(Kavanagh et al. p. 221-222)



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- ▶ Civil Servants advise, ministers decide
- ▶ A planned symbiosis between two sets of actors (Haldane 1918)
- ▶ A myth to justify what is going on?!?

(Kavanagh et al. p. 221-222)

# Who is a Minister?

<https://www.gov.uk/government/ministers> currently lists 113 "ministers", 25 whips and other functionaries



# Who is a Minister?



The Rt Hon  
**David Cameron  
MP**  
Prime Minister, First Lord  
of the Treasury, Minister  
for the Civil Service



The Rt Hon  
**George Osborne  
MP**  
First Secretary of State,  
Chancellor of the  
Exchequer



The Rt Hon  
**Theresa May MP**  
Secretary of State for the  
Home Department



The Rt Hon  
**Philip Hammond  
MP**  
Secretary of State for  
Foreign and  
Commonwealth Affairs



The Rt Hon  
**Michael Gove MP**  
Lord Chancellor and  
Secretary of State for  
Justice



The Rt Hon  
**Michael Fallon  
MP**  
Secretary of State for  
Defence



The Rt Hon  
**Iain Duncan  
Smith MP**  
Secretary of State for  
Work and Pensions



The Rt Hon  
**Jeremy Hunt MP**  
Secretary of State for  
Health



The Rt Hon  
**Chris Grayling  
MP**  
Lord President of the  
Council, Leader of the  
House of Commons



The Rt Hon  
**Justine Greening  
MP**  
Secretary of State for  
International  
Development



The Rt Hon  
**Nicky Morgan MP**  
Secretary of State for  
Schools, Minister for  
Writers and Equities



The Rt Hon  
**Baroness Stowell  
of Beeston MBE**  
Lord Privy Seal, Leader  
of the House of Lords



The Rt Hon  
**Patrick  
McLoughlin MP**  
Secretary of State for  
Transport



The Rt Hon  
**Sajid Javid MP**  
Secretary of State for  
Business, Innovation and  
Skills and President of  
the Board of Trade



The Rt Hon  
**Theresa Villiers  
MP**  
Secretary of State for  
Northern Ireland



The Rt Hon  
**Elizabeth Truss  
MP**  
Secretary of State for  
Environment, Food and  
Rural Affairs



The Rt Hon  
**Greg Clark MP**  
Secretary of State for  
Communities and Local  
Government



The Rt Hon  
**Stephen Crabb  
MP**  
Secretary of State for  
Wales



The Rt Hon  
**Oliver Letwin MP**  
Chancellor of the Duchy  
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The Rt Hon  
**John  
Whittingdale MP**  
Secretary of State for  
Culture, Media and Sport

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House of Commons



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The Rt Hon



The Rt Hon

## Policy-Making in a Fragmented System

- ▶ Collective Cabinet government is a myth
- ▶ The PM cannot oversee all (or most) political decisions and projects
- ▶ British government highly fragmented – “departmental turf”
- ▶ “Joined-up government” often portrayed as a naive/ridiculous idea
- ▶ “Departmentalism”
- ▶ Ministers stay for about two years on average

# Why Ministers Depend on Officials

- ▶ Ministers rely on “their” officials for
  - ▶ Factual information
  - ▶ Political advice
  - ▶ Access to Whitehall networks
  - ▶ Political cover
  - ▶ Implementation of their desired policies

## Why Departments Depend on Ministers

- ▶ Departments develop policies but . . .
- ▶ Ministers provide legitimacy (and are politically responsible)
- ▶ Ministers fight battles with other departments, cabinet, the PM
- ▶ Ministers drive legislation through parliament
- ▶ Civil servants do not like weak ministers
- ▶ Conflict between departments/ministers can be spectacular



# The Changing Role of (Cabinet) Ministers

- ▶ Traditionally, very close symbiosis of ministers/top civil servants
- ▶ Largely stable relationship during post-war years, but some evidence for changing role of ministers
- ▶ How can we understand what ministers actually do?
- ▶ Four basic roles:
  1. Policy role (involvement in policy making)
  2. Political role (representation of policy/department in various arenas)
  3. Executive role (departmental management & decision making)
  4. PR role (relations with media, public, interest groups)

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## Four Ideal Types of Ministers

1. Agenda Setters: changes agenda, culture, broad policy line of his/her department; example: Brown at the exchequer
  2. Policy Initiators: initiates a fundamentally new policy (Blunkett at the Home Office: ASBOS & dispersal orders)
  3. Policy Selectors: chooses from alternatives presented by his/her officials (Liddel as Secretary of State for Scotland)
  4. Policy Legitimizers/Minimalists: little impact, rubber-stamping departmental policy
- ▶ Ministers role(s) depend on context and circumstances
  - ▶ By and large, ministers more active and dominant than in the past
  - ▶ Ministers more likely to seek outside sources for policy advice

# The Changing Role of Civil Servants

- ▶ Traditionally, “Mandarins”
- ▶ Oxbridge educated Gentlemen closely involved in policy making
  - ▶ Advice on policy
  - ▶ Advice on presentation
- ▶ (Permanent) reform of traditional Civil Service started with Thatcher
- ▶ Attempts to bring in a more managerial style, Civil Servants as *policy implementors*
- ▶ (Growing importance of ministers)
- ▶ (Growing importance of the treasury)

# New Public Management

- ▶ An attempt to bring in market mechanisms and private-sector culture
- ▶ Efficiency and cost saving
- ▶ Decentralisation
- ▶ Performance indicators, targets, quality assurance etc.
- ▶ Affects the whole public sector (including schools, universities, the NHS etc.)
- ▶ Growth of “agencies”
- ▶ Introduced by Thatcher, continued by Major

## New Labour Reforms

- ▶ In many ways, a continuation of Conservative policy
- ▶ Less concern about scope of costs of government activity, more emphasis on effectiveness, modernisation, “delivery”
- ▶ Even more modernisation, public-private partnerships and “choice”
- ▶ “Big government”, but citizens as consumers of public services
- ▶ Even more external advisers
- ▶ Further de-centralisation and Europeanisation of the Civil Service
- ▶ Not much change under the coalition

## Conclusion

- ▶ Traditional Whitehall model not longer accurate
- ▶ Ministers more assertive and hands-on
- ▶ Permanent reform of the Civil Service and the wider public sector, often with unintended and negative consequences
- ▶ (Contradiction between NPM ideas and ministerial assertiveness)

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- ▶ (Contradiction between NPM ideas and ministerial assertiveness)
- ▶ Yet, pockets and elements of traditional Whitehall culture and Departmentalism remain (clip)





## Class questions

- ▶ See the handout