

Politicians: We cannot live with and without them. Our much-slandered group of legislators and decision-makers are often seen as corrupt, self-serving sycophants who possess more treachery than talent. We see them as careerists instead of ardent public servants. Also, bankers and estate agents are regularly voted in the least trusted career groups in the UK.

Also, there are actually some politicians that would go toe-to-toe with Frank Underwood from House of Cards; there are also more who are upright, hardworking and enthusiastic to serve their own country. Although, their age, race, sex and wealth might not be representative of the country at large, however, it isn't essentially their fault. The problem is far deeper in the organization and culture of the Parliament itself.

Get ready because we are going into details about some malicious and often neglected British government's aspects. From the MP selection process to their early resignations and we will also learn about why the system is crumbled and what can be done to resolve it.

## Becoming an MP candidate and contesting for election is both undemocratic and costly.

The attention of political analysts, media commentators and citizens is only concentrated on a politician once they win as if they came into existence the morning after a successful election campaign. However, In order to fully understand the UK's faulty political system and the reason why its citizens are displeased and frustrated with their leaders, it is important to know how politicians are nominated as candidates for office in the first place.

Elected politicians on the national level are called Members of Parliament (MPs) in the UK and they represent a local area known as a constituency. All political party selects one MP candidate for each constituency and local residents vote for the candidate they like to represent them in the lower house of Parliament called the House of Commons. The party with the most MPs in the House of Commons becomes the ruling party.

However, the process of selection of MP candidates in each party is totally undemocratic.

For instance, if Tory a politician wants to become the Party's MP candidate for Hemel Hempstead, she has to sway the selection panel which consists of the area's local Conservative Party councilors. However, these panels are sadly small which are barely over 250 people.

These people are mostly neglected; however, they are in charge of selecting the names on the UK ballot papers. There are mostly unrepresentative. It was revealed in 2013 by the Local Government Association that 67% of local councilors were male and 96% were ethnically white in which the average age of these councilors was 60 years.

Even though you are selected, the expenses of running for election is very high and expensive.

Selected candidates must go back to their careers, committing their time in the rainy streets, going doors to doors and organizing various charity events. In order to get support from the community, many go as far as donating money for various projects, for example, renovating the local church or buying a minibus for the school. They spend a lot on fuel because they travel a lot to their constituency and also from one hotel to the other attending national party conferences. However, none of these expenses is funded by their party.

37 Tory party candidates were asked in a survey that was conducted by the website Conservative Home about the amount of money running for an election had set them back. Most of them spent an excessive amount of £34,392.

Auditioning for a job with such a ridiculous financial drain, a job that you're not even sure whether or not you will get it and this discourages a lot of people from standing. Worse, it makes it impossible for brilliant, poor individuals to go into government.

The ones that do make it are criticized; however, they're not as bad as we consider them to be.

The majority of the MPs are devoted, well-meaning people working in a difficult job.

You will be surprised to find a person that really likes politicians. The majority of us either dislike them with passion or see them with cold indifference. However, we should be more sympathetic as the majority of them are well-meaning people taking an exceptionally hard job.

Their issues start once they are elected. The Parliament is located in The Palace of Westminster which is an extensive tangle of tiny offices, long corridors, conference rooms' and a lot of restaurants as well as bars. MPs mostly complain of being lost and confused for weeks after being elected into office.

However, there is no training or introductory process for newly elected politicians. On any day in Parliament, there a lot of activities an MP could do, they can either listen to debates and defer parliamentary questions, or meet with campaign groups, ministers or journalists. How do MPs manage to share their time? There is no actual guidance or appraisal system to help them develop. Politicians are left alone to decide their own method; it is a totally unprofessional place.

Another protruding problem in Parliament is mental health.

This problem is so severe that Westminster's team of medical staff now has committed funding for psychiatric treatments and patients. Charles Walker a Conservative MP, who got commendation in 2013 when he gave a detailed of his 30-year struggle with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. He believes that the burden of Parliament affects mental illness and increases failing marriages.

Also, in this internet era, people suffering from mental illness now have to cope with trolls being able to address torrents of dreadful abuse at individuals directly.

This is precisely what happened to Labor MP Stella Creasy. In 2014, Creasy gave her support to a campaign for Jane Austen to be included in the £10 banknote. Peter Nunn who was an online troll was so enraged by this idea that he sent Creasy a series of disgusting rape threats. He served 18 weeks in jail for this offense.

Now, given the virtually universal dislike of politicians, you might not care about an MP even if they're striving to find balance in Parliament or suffering from mental health issues. Maybe you find it difficult to feel much sympathy for someone who earns £79,468 yearly. Even though you

should still care whether or not an MP can perform their duty well and mental health issues hinder this.

What's more, with such an unappealing job, you should be concerned that gifted people are being discouraged from entering into politics.

## There isn't adequate emphasis on legislating in an MP's job.

Most of us are not only ignorant about the obstacles facing new and future MPs but we are also mostly unaware of what politicians truly do. The majority of us think they are involved in two things which are vote and lie. Even though they actually do both of those things, they do way more than that.

MPs have two main duties which are making, debating as well as examining laws and representing the interests of their constituency. Also, they fulfill some other responsibilities like becoming a government minister. These high-ranking officials lead government departments, like the Department for Education.

Since formulating and examination of legislation is really important, it's very easy to think that's what MPs do with most of their time, however, that is not true. As a matter of fact, a politician's working week is mostly dominated by the burden of their constituency. It was revealed by the Hansard Society that these activities take up 49% of an MP's time while only 21% is spent on passing and debating new British laws.

Therefore, what are MPs really doing when focusing on their constituency?

They are mostly holding surgeries in the local area. These give local voters opportunities to have one-on-one meetings with their MPs, talking about local issues or asking for help in addressing those issues.

This work is mostly overlooked by the media and aspiring politicians don't see it as a valuable use of their time. However, voters sees this as an important part of an MP's job description and it's saved various people from disaster.

One day, a troubled woman arrived at Labour MP Karen Buck's surgery in Westminster North before she was due for birth. Her landlord had terminated her contract without any form of warning. Buck managed to prevent this disaster through her political influence by providing the woman with temporary accommodation just with one phone call to the local council.

It is true that these surgeries are drivers for good and most MPs truly enjoy the work they do and are aware of the positive impact it has on people's lives. However, we should ask if this is the best use of politicians' time as they are part of the most skilled people in Britain and charged with formulating as well as scrutinizing its laws.

Also, we should question why the country's social safety net is so poor that it needs interference from MPs to solve personal issues. The main irony of constituency surgeries is that they are frequently trying to address issues caused by bad legislation.

## British legislation is understudied which is a result of the country's poor political structure.

Ask the next Briton you come across to explain how bills are formed and passed into law in the UK. Probabilities are you'll be greeted with a puzzled look and some respectful apologies. However, that's not down to this poor Brit who is politically illiterate and it's because the UK lawmaking process is complex, long-winded and ineffective.

In theory, it works perfectly. When a bill is first issued by the government, it undergoes two readings in the House of Commons. However, the first reading is just a formality where the minister reveals the bill. It is only in the second reading that MPs have the opportunity to debate the law. These debates are majorly on the bill's principles instead of discussing its details.

Afterward, the bill moves into the committee stage where a small number of MPs debate about the bill again but this time in full detail. These MPs can suggest revisions to the bill which are then voted on individually. Again, the bill goes through to the Commons for the report stage where any MP can propose adjustments. Lastly, there is a third reading in the Commons and all

MPs vote on the bill. if it's accepted, it goes on to debate and examination in the Parliament's upper house known as the House of Lords.

If this seems like there are various opportunities for politicians to reveal and debate legislation, then it true that there is a lot of time. However, it is an entirely different question of whether they will or even can use them.

The main issue here is the parliamentary whipping system. Every party selects a number of whips that ensure that every MP votes in accord with their party's wishes. These enforcers mostly try to make unruly MPs fall in line with threats, for instance blocking their career development. A vote against one's party legislation often means a vote against your own career.

However, the whipping system doesn't only influence MP's votes, it also manipulates their scrutiny. The party whips agree on which MPs will examine a bill during its committee phase and it's possible that those that get chosen will be loyal to the party and it is unlikely that they will have knowledge on the specific subject at hand.

By doing this, a process meant to examine and debate legislation becomes a party loyalty competition. Britain's political structure support members of the committee phase to become biased puppets and not objective lawmakers.

**Select committees are good for lawmaking, however, they can't avert the damage caused by out of touch politicians.**

Even though the whole structure of Parliament does contribute to legislating lax, there is a device in the Westminster that is certainly a driver for good which is known as select committees.

Select committees comprise of MPs from each and every major party, and considerably arranged depending on the departments of state such as the Department for Education, or subjects like Science and Technology. Select committees have the potential to order inquiries, inspect a department's spending and even question high-ranking ministers on certain policies.

Unlike almost every other part of the Parliament, politicians in the select committees are required to act as thoughtful legislators who explore through proposed laws. They can even ask the members of their own party difficult questions as they are fearless of payback from their whips. Being the party's select committee is really condemned by politicians and this is why the majority of MPs do not consider it.

The greatest select committees spotlight concerns with bills even before they are voted on, and order inquiries into laws that are causing chaos on average people.

However, select committees can't protect the public from every governmental mistake most especially when they're executive policies coming from the top-ranked people.

In 2012, when George Osborne was Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer, the finance minister; he announced a budget that was so tragic that it was known as the "Omnishambles Budget." It affected the working-class population so bad, placing a 20% tax on hot takeaway foods as well as caravans and restricting the tax relief that philanthropists got from charitable funds. Within a few weeks, Osborne publicized that he was reducing these unpleasant policies which led to a lot of embarrassment for him.

Also, there's one main motive why Osborne formed such a disordered budget.

Like so much of Parliament, Osborne was not in touch with the people he was supposed to serve. He was surrounded by ministers with majorly similar wealth, education, gender, and ethnicity as him, Osborne didn't understand how his policies would affect the ordinary people.

One of the problems is the financial obstacles that hinder many potential politicians from campaigning as MP, and Osborne cannot be held responsible. However what this Oxford-educated aristocrat failed to do was step outside his circle and meet with regular citizens, people who would have given a different and valued perception to his policymaking.

Osborne might have been shortsighted, however, he's just one part of a much bigger, toxic culture that happens in Parliament.

## Britain's toxic political culture is partly to be blamed for our unproductive politicians.

We already see how Britain's unproductive political structure affects good lawmaking. However, this toxicity unavoidably affects the political culture negatively too.

The UK political system doesn't appreciate gifted legislators and MPs are like every other human being too. They are determined and want to gain a lot of success and credit for their skills. Additionally, the best method of attaining this is by becoming a government department as a minister.

In the UK, for a person to become a minister, you have to join the executive branch of government which is the branch that makes critical decisions about the governance of the state. Aside from the extra £33,000 that ministers get per year, they also receive a lot of attention from the media and the opportunity to influence vital government policy. The plea of becoming a minister is part of a culture incentivizing politicians to overlook mistakes in bills proposed by their party to reach high hierarchy.

What's more, the difference in recognition between being a backbencher who is an MP that does not have an executive government position and a minister who is really good that the fall from grace is difficult for a lot of people to accept.

The rearrangement of the executive government in 2014 done by David Cameron who was the Prime Minister then showed this. Politicians such as William Hague, David Willetts, and Andrew Lansley lost their jobs as influential ministers and were demoted back to lowly MPs. By 2015, when the general election was coming up; they had all resigned from the Parliament fully.

However, these people were not elected as executive ministers; rather they were elected as MPs or legislators. The loss of these gifted politicians affected Parliament; for instance, bill readings and parliamentary debates could no longer be of use from their experience and authority.

This problem is symptomatic of a commonly held feeling that, increasingly, MPs don't see serving the state as a job for life. A lot of politicians, from the ex-Prime Minister David Cameron

to the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne, have found life outside of politics to be more sufficient and worthwhile after stepping down from high-status posts.

If we want to transform this political culture, we need to give more acknowledgments and greater respect for MPs as legislators.

## Yes-men are the riskiest and detrimental product of Parliament's political culture.

The impatience of politicians to be in their party has led to the most indefensible part of British political culture: yes-men. With self-serving dreams of getting into the executive government, yes-men leave their responsibilities as legislators. They achieve this by voting through bills on which they're totally unaware of or failing to inspect legislation which can either be by sucking up to the party rank or not dedicating the time needed.

However, being poor for time isn't only the fault of constituency work. A lot of bills are debated and voted upon at any time in Parliament in which even for the most dedicated of legislators, it's difficult to stay knowledgeable and considerably vote on them all.

The size of bills and lack of time is what makes it very easy to become a yes-man. Rather than avoiding debates and votes you have no knowledge of, it's too easy to follow your party whip and vote on a problem to score points, backing the principle without inspecting the information.

One of the most common illustrations of yes-men destructing the legislative process was the terrible 2010 "bedroom tax," an awfully short-sighted effort to solve the UK's continuous social housing issue.

More than 250,000 social houses in the country were overpopulated in 2015. What's more, since tenants are given their home forever, a lot of parents were still living in a 3-bedroom house, even though their children were grown up and moved out of the house. Therefore, while 250,000 social houses were overcrowded, there was another 400,000 which were under-occupied.

To address this problem the government agreed to reduce the housing benefit paid to tenants living in under-occupied homes, even when they were given the house for the rest of their life. Worse, the forfeit applied to tenants even if they couldn't willingly economize which of course a lot of them were unable to because there were no social houses for them to move in.

During the process of the bill's committee stage, only two backbench MPs decided to voice out even as at that, they only interrupted the other party hierarchy's questions so as to blindly back the proposed legislation. They were simply adhering to instructions given by their whips. Other endeavors to examine the bill was unsuccessful as the yes-man culture was strong.

And the outcome was shocking: in a year, above 57,000 families fell into arrears on their rent payments. Some activists even claim that suicides were associated with the law.

With such an awful legislative system, the UK needs to ask how they can solve it.

## We can take certain steps to reform Britain's political system and make sure we get good politicians.

Thus, Her Majesty's Government is in great chaos. What can be done? The politically disillusioned one will claim that attempting to reform Westminster is similar to that of redecorating a house with damaged plumbing and it is better to gut it out and start over. However, that is not completely true. As a matter of fact, there are various reforms that can lead to a positive change.

Firstly, the UK should ensure that the MP selection process is democratized.

This can be done by ensuring that local selection panels are more diverse and financial support should be given in the form of a living wage and stipend to candidates that are struggling. This will ensure that those selecting who runs for election are more representative of the country and it will ensure that gifted people are not left out due to their financial circumstance.

Secondly, the political system needs to change.

As we know that the UK's legislative and executive branches of government are disordered. Although MPs are put in place as legislators in order to examine and pass bills, the party's hierarchy can concurrently promote them to an executive ministerial post. Being in both legislative and executive positions causes a clash of interest which then leaves politicians permanently unfocused by dreams of promotion.

In order to address this, we have to consider fully separating these branches hindering MP's from concurrently becoming ministers. This will ensure the Prime Minister to select ministers that might not be a member of their party; for instance a talented politician in the opposition party and industry leaders.

Thirdly, MPs should become more accountable for the legislation they have formulated

In the current system, politicians are hardly asked to explain their voting selections or answer for the formulation of doubtful laws. The establishment of public payback in which MPs are called before a panel to give details of their actions would help solve this. For instance, a public payback panel on the unfamous bedroom tax could have involved experts on housing policy and tenants whose lives were affected by the law. This would have led to a valuable motivation for MPs to examine legislation instead of satisfying their party whips.

However, it's not only the Parliament's structure that needs reforming, but the parliament's culture also needs reforming as well.

This means supporting MPs to want to be MPs and not ministers or constituency caseworkers. This can be achieved by rewarding those who dedicate themselves to legislative work with higher salaries or with more media exposure. Another important step is conducting training for all new MPs and the fact that Parliament doesn't do this is a shame.

If these changes can be done, the UK politicians will be representative of their country, concentrating on their duties in fulfilling them.

## Why We Get the Wrong Politicians by Isabel Hardman Book Review

Politicians are not bad people, most of them are often gifted people who want to make a positive change by taking such a hard job. The fault of the UK's broken parliamentary system should rather be put on its structure and culture which uplift politicians from the same backgrounds, support insignificant partisanship and promotion to executive-level which hinders the observation of legislation. If the MP selection process can be democratized and legislation can be separated from the executive, the government can be improved thereby encouraging the right moral in British politicians.

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