



House of Commons
Public Administration
Select Committee

A Matter of Honour: Reforming the Honours System

Fifth Report of Session 2003–04

Volume I



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*Report, together with formal minutes and
annex*

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The Public Administration Select Committee

The Public Administration Select Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the reports of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, of the Health Service Commissioners for England, Scotland and Wales and of the Parliamentary Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, which are laid before this House, and matters in connection therewith and to consider matters relating to the quality and standards of administration provided by civil service departments, and other matters relating to the civil service; and the committee shall consist of eleven members.

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Mr Kevin Brennan MP (*Labour, Cardiff West*)
Annette Brooke MP (*Liberal Democrat, Mid Dorset and Poole North*)
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The current staff of the Committee are Philip Aylett (Clerk), Clive Porro (Second Clerk), Lucinda Maer (Committee Specialist), Jackie Recardo (Committee Assistant), Jenny Pickard (Committee Secretary) and Phil Jones (Senior Office Clerk).

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Summary

“I have done the state some service, and they know’t”.

(Othello, Act V Scene II)

This Report considers the honours system (except awards for gallantry and those honours which are in the personal gift of the Queen), and asks whether the current Orders continue to be the right means of marking service to the community. The Committee examines the arguments for and against change, and assesses the merits of various proposals for reform.

We found that there was solid public support for many of the honours conferred, especially appointments to the Order of the British Empire. There was little if any evidence of the sort of serious corruption which at one time affected the system, and the administrative procedures for the selection of candidates were seen to be working effectively.

However, we share the unease of critics who were concerned at the continued award of honours to political donors and others who have rendered political services. We considered that the reputation of the system could be jeopardised by the fact that the Prime Minister’s Office still produces the main list of honours for submission to the Queen. The Report expresses concern at the lack of transparency which surrounds the operation of the system, and in particular the failure to make public the identities of the members of the selection committees. Ministerial accountability was also considered to be weak.

The Report expresses doubts about the way honours are distributed to state servants, including civil servants and members of the armed forces. It was felt that the continued use of the two Orders almost exclusively conferred on state servants—the Order of the Bath and the Order of St Michael and St George—suggested that they were receiving favourable treatment. Doubts about equity and fairness were deepened by the composition of the honours selection committees, which continue to be dominated by senior civil servants. The title “Order of the British Empire” was now considered to be unacceptable, being thought to embody values that are no longer shared by many of the country’s population.

We make a series of recommendations which we believe are necessary to ensure that the honours system is consistent with the principles of sound public administration. These include: an end to further appointments to the Order of the British Empire, the Order of the Bath and the Order of St Michael and St George; the foundation of a new Order of British Excellence; a phasing out of titles and name-changing honours; reforms to increase the independence of the selection process through the establishment of an Honours Commission and the end of the ‘Prime Minister’s List’ and other ministerial honours lists; and proposals for increasing public awareness of the system.

1 Our approach

Marking service to the community

1. This report examines the honours system and assesses whether it is now fit for purpose as a way of recognising and rewarding service to the community. It considers possible proposals for reform.

2. In its inquiry into the honours system the Committee has been aware of the importance of history, and of the need to understand the often ancient and complex traditions which underlie the system. But it has become clear that the history of British honours is also a story of reform and re-invention. Our inquiry has tried both to respect that history and to pay due attention to the need for further appropriate reform. We have taken a special interest in the part played by honours in the work of the Civil Service.

3. This inquiry emerged from our larger examination of the ministerial prerogative, which began in 2003 and on which we reported in March 2004.¹ It seemed to us at the end of 2003 that this highly visible use of the prerogative deserved special attention. There had been allegations which cast doubt on the integrity of the process by which awards were made, and widespread questioning of the relevance of the most-used Order, that of the British Empire. In our seven evidence sessions (as well as a number of sessions which were originally part of the inquiry into ministerial powers and the prerogative) we explored many of these issues.

4. We heard oral evidence from 15 witnesses and received over 100 written submissions of various kinds, many of them from individuals with personal accounts of what it is like to deal with the honours system. There were a number of highly constructive contributions, and we are very grateful to all those who provided evidence. The statistical supplement in the Annex was produced by one of our Members, Anne Campbell MP, to whom the Committee is particularly grateful.

What are honours for?

5. One of the oddest features of the honours system in Britain is that there is very little discussion about its purpose. It is as if, despite its importance in public administration, and the substantial sums of public money and official time spent on it, the reasons for the existence of the honours system were beyond discussion. We do not agree with this view. We take the honours system seriously, as a way in which the state seeks to recognise service and achievement that it values. This is an important function, which is why it deserves proper attention.

6. In particular, we consider that honours are not mere decorations; they are important symbols of what is valued in national life. To frame our discussion, we set out below some principles which we have used as a guide in assessing the quality of an honours system. We then briefly describe the current system.

¹ Public Administration Select Committee, Fourth Report 2003–04, *Taming the Prerogative: Strengthening Ministerial Accountability to Parliament*, HC 422

Suggested principles of an effective honours system

- excellence—it should reward outstanding and exceptional service or achievement, at all levels
- integrity—it should not be, or be seen to be, corrupt
- transparency—it should be as open as possible, consistent with the need for confidentiality as to individual decisions
- dignity—awards should be widely accepted as worthy
- clarity—it should be easy for the public to understand why awards are made
- fairness—it should not favour, or appear to favour, any one group

These principles provide a yardstick against which the current operation of the honours system can be assessed.

Today's honours system

7. About 3000 honours are awarded annually, at New Year and on the Queen's Official Birthday in June. This does not include the lists produced when Prime Ministers resign, which have in the past sometimes been controversial.² A small number of awards (such as those in the Orders of the Garter and the Thistle) are in the personal gift of the Queen. Our inquiry has not covered the issues raised by the Queen's honours, or awards for gallantry, but has concentrated on the others, which for convenience we shall call the "national" honours. The Prime Minister's list, as it is known, with some 1,000 names on each occasion, provides the largest part of the overall total of national honours. The Diplomatic Service and Overseas list is submitted by the Foreign Secretary and contains about 150 names. The Defence Services list is submitted by the Secretary of State for Defence and has some 200 names. There have been a number of reforms to the system over the years, the last extensive one in 1993, when the then Prime Minister John Major initiated various changes, notably to make it easier for the general public to nominate candidates for honours and to increase the number of those honoured for voluntary work.

8. Central to the machinery for the Prime Minister's list are a number of Honours selection committees: Agriculture, Commerce and Industry, Maecenas³, Media, Medicine, Local Services, Science and Technology, Sport, and State Services. They examine the merits of all candidates for honours, sifted from the nominations considered by Departments. From these the Committees select (or endorse) those for recommendation to the Prime Minister.

² Harold Wilson's resignation honours list of 1976, popularly known as 'the lavender list' because of the paper it was said to have been written on, was the subject of much criticism and a dispute between the government and the Honours Scrutiny Committee. See Michael De-la-Noy *The Honours System* (1992) p 141

³ This committee covers the arts.

9. The selections are referred to the Main Honours Committee which is made up of the Chairmen of the selection committees and one or two others. As a recent Government report summarises it: “The Main Committee reviews the work of the Committees, reassesses any sensitive or controversial recommendations or omissions and seeks to ensure that the balance between the various sectors is satisfactory”.⁴ The Chairman of the Main Committee submits a list to the Prime Minister along with a personal report. The Prime Minister subsequently makes his own recommendations to the Queen. The deliberations of these Committees are confidential, although at the end of 2003 there were leaks to the media of a number of documents relating to the selection of candidates.

10. The three lists submitted by the Prime Minister, Defence Secretary and Foreign Secretary, are composed partly of names generated by Government departments themselves through their networks of public bodies and other contacts, and partly of those who have been nominated directly by the public. The present public nomination system dates from 1993, when Mr Major concluded that “the means of nomination for honours should be more widely known and more open”.⁵ There is a standard nomination form, setting out the type of information which is required to assess candidates.

11. The Ceremonial Secretariat in the Cabinet Office has 16 staff, all of whom are civil servants, and is currently headed by Mrs Gay Catto, the Ceremonial Officer. It plays the pivotal role in supporting the honours committees and processing the large amount of paperwork involved in what continues to be a wholly paper-based operation. We are very grateful to Mrs Catto and her staff for welcoming us to the Secretariat and briefing us on the way it carries out its functions. An average of 6,000 to 7,000 new nominations come in annually. The last decade has seen a substantial but not entirely consistent rise in the proportion of directly nominated candidates (said to have “public support”) from 37% in the New Year Honours 1995 to 51% in the Birthday Honours 2003.

12. Other government departments make a variety of arrangements for producing possible candidates for honours. Names, which may come either from public nominations or from departmental contacts, are usually collated by an honours secretary with a small team, and considered at one or more meetings by the Permanent Secretary and other senior figures. A series of recent Parliamentary Answers to Brian White MP, one of the Committee’s Members, demonstrates that there is a wide range of approaches, reflecting the varying importance attached to honours in each department.⁶

13. For example, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which produces its own list, has five full-time staff, headed by a relatively senior official (a Principal equivalent) in a dedicated honours team. Their work is supervised by members of the Senior Management Structure (Senior Civil Service) who devote “approximately six to seven person-weeks in aggregate a year” to honours. At the other end of the spectrum is the Treasury, which does not identify an honours team but has a middle manager (Higher Executive Officer or

⁴ Cabinet Office Honours Review 2000–01. (Thereafter referred to as the *Wilson Review*): *Committee membership*, para 2

⁵ HC Deb, 4 March 1993, Col 455

⁶ HC Deb, 30 June 2004, col 353W; HC Deb, 17 June 2004, col 1087W; HC Deb 18 June 2004, col 1143W; HC Deb, 8 June 2004, col 295W; HC Deb, 8 June 2004, col 288W, HC Deb, 7 June 2004, col 259W; HC Deb, 7 June 2004, col 3W; HC Deb, 7 June 2004, col 103W; HC Deb, 7 June 2004, col 95W; HC Deb, 27 May 2004, col 1724W; HC Deb, 20 May 2004, col 1193W; HC Deb 17 May 2004, col 676W

Senior Executive Officer) who devotes around 10% of working time to honours. The senior officials on the Treasury Management Board meet twice a year to consider nominations.

14. Table A sets out the Orders and other elements which make up today's honours system (except peerages). Those Orders marked with an asterisk (*) are in the personal gift of the Queen, although formally the Monarch is the 'fount of honour' in a general sense.

Table A

Order	Levels and Postnominals	Notes
Most Noble Order of the Garter*	KG/LG (Knight/Lady)	Founded in 1348. Restricted to senior members of the Royal family and 24 others. Restored to gift of the Sovereign by Attlee in 1946
Most Ancient and most Noble Order of the Thistle*	KT/LT (Knight/Lady)	Revived 1687: Scottish equivalent of the Garter. Restricted to 16 members. Restored to gift of the Sovereign by Attlee in 1947.
Most Honourable Order of the Bath	GCB (Knight/Dame Grand Cross) KCB/DCB(Knight/Dame Commander)	Revived 1725. Military and Civil Divisions. Upper limits: 120, 365 and 1,975 for the 3 levels. Career civil servants' order.
Order of Merit*	CB (Companion) OM	Founded in 1902. Restricted to 24 members. In the gift of the Sovereign for "savants and soldiers": distinction in military service, literature, science or art.
Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George	GCMG(Knight/Dame Grand Cross) KCMG/DCMG(Knight/Dame Commander)	Established in 1818. Diplomatic Service's order. Upper limits: 125, 360 and 1,750 for the 3 levels.
Royal Victorian Order*	CMG (Companion) GCVO (Knight/Dame Grand Cross) KCVO/DCVO (Knight/Dame Commander)	Instituted 1896. In the gift of the Sovereign. Royal Household's order.
Most Excellent Order of the British Empire	CVO (Commander) LVO (Lieutenant) MVO (Member) GBE (Knight/Dame Grand Cross) KBE/DBE (Knight/Dame Commander)	Founded 1917. "In recognition of the manifold services, voluntary and otherwise, rendered in connection with the war". Most widely conferred order. Upper limits for top 3 levels: 100, 885 and 10,000.
Knights Bachelor	CBE (Commander) OBE (Officer) MBE (Member) Sir	Do not comprise an order of chivalry, merely a status. 1908 the Imperial Society of Knights Bachelor formed.
The Order of the Companion of Honour	CH	Founded 1917. Restricted to 65 members. For service of conspicuous national importance.

A history of re-invention

15. This table illustrates the antiquity of some of the Orders of Chivalry, but it also indicates the many changes the national honours system has undergone in more recent times. It is a history of adaptation, even of improvisation. Professor David Cannadine argued in his evidence to us that there had been two main periods of change in recent centuries:

“By the mid eighteenth century, the British system of honours was both elaborate and restricted. In ascending order of precedence, it consisted of knights bachelor, the Order of the Bath, the Order of the Thistle, the Order of the Garter, baronets (essentially hereditary knighthoods) and peers (in five levels, ascending from baron to viscount to earl to marquess to duke). This was an exclusive and hierarchical system, which recognized and supported aristocratic authority and military prowess. Knighthoods were not hereditary; baronetcies and peerages were.

“Since then, the British honours system has undergone two great phases of elaboration and re-invention. The first (and lesser) was from the 1780s to the 1810s, which saw the creation of the Order of St Patrick for Ireland (matching the Thistle for Scotland and the Garter or England), the extension of the Order of the Bath for military service in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars against France, and the creation of the Order of St Michael and St George. This was still, essentially, an aristocratic cum military system, partly hereditary, partly not.

“The second (and greater) phase of expansion lasted from the last quarter of the nineteenth century until the First World War, and witnessed the creation of a much more complex system, which was imperial rather than national, and (in some areas at least) was open to a much wider spread of the population”.⁷

16. The history of individual Orders lends support to Professor Cannadine’s thesis. The Order of St Michael and St George is less than 200 years old, and was originally intended to honour leading figures in the Ionian Islands and Malta, both then British possessions. But in the mid-nineteenth century the function of the Order changed; and from the 1870s onwards, in response to the presumed requirements of diplomacy, it was conferred on a growing number of British ambassadors. At around the same time it began increasingly to be bestowed on leaders in various parts of the Empire (see below, chapter 3). Today it is the principal Diplomatic Service honour, and no longer has any substantial connection with its origins in the islands of the Mediterranean.⁸

17. The Order of the British Empire is less than a century old, having been created in 1917, in large part to honour civilian work during the Great War. Its introduction led to a huge expansion in the number of awards made, honouring a wide variety of contributions at local and regional as well as national level. In 1921 *Burke’s Handbook to the Order of the British Empire* hailed it as “the British Democracy’s own Order of Chivalry”. The Order of the Companions of Honour was founded on the same day as the Order of the British Empire, and was intended to provide an honour for those who would, as the Lord

⁷ HON 53

⁸ PJ Galloway, *The Order of St Michael and St George* (London, 2000)

President of the Council, Earl Curzon of Kedleston, put it, “not refuse a decoration but would, for reasons entirely honourable to themselves, abjure a title”.⁹

18. Not everyone, however, was enthused by the prospect of honouring the humble. Partly because it extended the reach of the system for the first time well beyond the Court and similar limited circles to which honours had previously been restricted (and partly because of the scandal that surrounded the selling of honours by political parties in the 1920s), the new Order was the object of some derision in its early years. As the historian of the Order, Dr P J Galloway, puts it, the Order “suffered a certain amount of scorn and ridicule throughout the 1920s”.¹⁰ The Order of the Bath, an honour most often nowadays conferred on senior civil servants and officers in the armed forces, is so-called because of the knightly medieval tradition of ritual bathing, but it is not truly medieval in origin, having been founded in 1725.

19. Obsolescence has also been part of the history of honours. The official account produced by the Central Office of Information describes a number of Orders as “obsolescent”, including several whose demise was a result of political change. The Order of the Star of India and the Order of the Indian Empire have had no additions to their numbers since the end of Britain’s Empire in the sub-continent in 1947, while since 1936 the same fate has befallen the Order of St Patrick, once conferred on Irish peers by the British monarch.

20. This picture of the birth and death of honours demonstrates the accuracy of Professor Cannadine’s judgement that “the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were periods of unprecedented honorific inventiveness”, in which “Britain’s titular hierarchy was exported to the far boundaries of empire”.¹¹

The Government’s approach

21. The present Government has, as a matter of policy, tried to increase the proportion of honours conferred on women and people from the ethnic minorities. It has also increased the proportion of awards to those who directly deliver public services. An example of the latter is the regular flow of knighthoods and damehoods for state school headteachers.¹²

22. Sir Hayden Phillips, Permanent Secretary at the Department for Constitutional Affairs and the most senior official responsible for the honours system, initiated an official review early in 2004. It has concentrated in particular on further increasing the diversity of recipients, enhancing transparency and strengthening the independence of the system by which recommendations for honours are made. The outcome of the Review is likely to be published soon.

23. In recent times, the most substantial internal analysis has been the “Wilson Review” of the system carried out in 2000 and 2001 by the senior official David Wilkinson at the request of Sir Richard Wilson (now Lord Wilson of Dinton), then Cabinet Secretary and

⁹ P J Galloway *The Order of the British Empire* (London, 1996), p 14

¹⁰ HON 61

¹¹ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British saw their Empire* (London, 2001), p 86

¹² *Wilson Review: Criteria*, para 34

Head of the Home Civil Service. That Review contained a series of proposals for reform including the creation of a new order and an end to exclusive arrangements for state servants. It also recommended enhanced independence in selection procedures and improved publicity to encourage more public nominations for honours.

24. Other countries, including some with Westminster-style systems of government, have in recent years also taken a radical look at their honours systems. Australia has perhaps gone furthest in reviewing the system, through major public consultations and acting on the results. This review took place in the mid 1990s and, when it asked the public, found “overwhelming support for a structure which reduces the impression of a reward hierarchy duplicating occupational or socio-economic hierarchies”.¹³

¹³ Ibid para 27

2 The benefits of the current system and the case against change

25. There is a case to be made against any substantial change to the honours system, and some of those who submitted evidence made it with force and eloquence. This chapter sets out some of these arguments for maintaining the existing arrangements.

26. When honours recognise truly distinguished service or outstanding achievement, they can inspire real enthusiasm, reinforce public pride in achievement, and “make the country feel good about itself” in the words of the Wilson Review.¹⁴ This is particularly noticeable when honours strike a chord with local or regional loyalties. Graeme Allan of Whitley Bay in Tyne and Wear said that titles were “an established part of ‘Britishness’” and a “precious heritage”, citing an example that was clearly close to his heart:

“In my native Tyneside, the joy and happiness when Newcastle Utd manager, Bobby Robson, was knighted was unbounded. Any attempt to deny honours to Geordie heroes would cause a backlash in Labour’s North-East heartland, where football is regarded with religious zeal”.¹⁵

27. Lord Hurd of Westwell drew a similar conclusion from a less prominent award:

“Recently I listened to a discussion of the Monarchy on a local radio station which reached a climax when a young man described how he went to Buckingham Palace to receive an MBE from the Prince of Wales. For the first time, he said he felt proud to be British. This reaction may seem unsophisticated, but in my experience it is widespread and too valuable to be ignored. For that reason I would favour retaining the different Orders in their present form”.¹⁶

28. Lord Hurd also saw the value of the system’s long pedigree, praising it as a “link with the country’s past. The Honours system brings its recipients into a relationship with that past of which most are proud. Hence the importance of retaining the Queen as the fount of honour”.¹⁷ Similar views were expressed by Dr P J Galloway, the historian of several of the Orders, who argued that the power of the system rested on its coherence and antiquity. He considered that its foundations would be undermined if due respect was not paid to each part of the edifice:

“The title of the Order of the British Empire is no more outdated than the titles of the Order of the Garter, the Order of the Bath, the Order of St Michael and St George or the Royal Victorian Order. These are historic names that emerged for good reason at particular moments in the nation’s history ... that those names are redolent of ages and concerns long past is not to their disgrace, and no ground for their abolition”.¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid para 14

¹⁵ HON 56

¹⁶ HON 73

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ HON 61

29. Raphael Heydel-Mankoo, who has written extensively on honours matters, also identified a strong historical connection between the various parts of the UK honours system, and saw great value in continuity:

“Prestige and romance are areas of fundamental importance to an honours system. We must remember that the senior honours are in fact orders of “chivalry”. Names such as “The Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle” serve as a reminder of the age of chivalry. We should be very wary of changing names of historic importance simply to satisfy perceived, and often transitory, political sensitivities. The British Empire is a historical reality”.¹⁹

30. We were also told that there was little public demand for change to the honours system. Dr Galloway dismissed recent negative media comment, denied that the system’s reputation had been diminished, and declared that “the United Kingdom honours system in general is quite free from controversy”.²⁰ Several correspondents saw the low rate of refusal of honours as a sign of broad public acceptance.²¹

31. Several apparent practical and legal objections to change were also put to us. Dr Galloway pointed out that Letters Patent in 1917 declared that the Order of the British Empire should be “called and known forever after” by that name, and “by no other designation”. He also suggests that the creation of a completely new Order with a different name would hurt the feelings of the 90,000 living members of the Empire Order who would “find themselves members of a derided, devalued and dying Order, which might, by virtue of becoming obsolete or redundant, become the object of ridicule and amusement before disappearing into complete obscurity”.²²

32. The size and structure of the system were robustly defended. Although there is a perception that the United Kingdom system is elaborate and extensive, we heard evidence from Guy Sainty, General Editor of *Burke’s Peerage and Baronetage World Orders of Knighthood*, that the UK was a model of restraint compared with France, which makes “four times as many awards as Great Britain in any one year” or Italy, whose “Order of Work” has no fewer than 850,000 living members. There are, according to Mr Sainty, 20,000 additions to the Italian Order every year, compared with a grand total of 3000 per annum on British lists.²³ The Wilson Review also examined the case against multi-level awards such as the MBE, OBE and CBE, but concluded that it was necessary to recognise different levels of contribution and that UK practice was not out of line with those in other countries.

33. We were also warned against any reform that might reduce the capacity of the state to use the honours system in its diplomatic dealings with foreign countries. R M McKeag said there was often concern in the Republic of Ireland on the arrival of important visiting dignitaries:

¹⁹ HON 54

²⁰ HON 61

²¹ HON 68

²² HON 61

²³ HON 57

“[The Republic] is one of the few countries in the world that lacks an honours system. At present this is proving something of an embarrassment to the Irish government. How should visiting heads of state and other dignitaries be honoured? How should outstanding citizens have their contributions recognised? At present the Provost of Trinity College is asked to award an honorary doctorate or the Lord Mayor of Dublin is asked to present the freedom of the city. I understand that both are beginning to balk at bailing out the state”.²⁴

34. Thus the current system is seen by its defenders as dignified, soundly based on history and inspiring widespread enthusiasm. Ill-considered change, they believe, would irretrievably damage a precious part of national life. For these witnesses, continuity is almost all.

²⁴ HON 52

3 Criticism of the current honours system

35. Although we heard much of the benefits of the honours system, many witnesses raised objections to the way it currently operates. There were two main categories of complaint. Some witnesses claimed that honours were **distributed** in ways that were unfair or socially inequitable. Others were more concerned with questions of **process and structure**, including the titles of the Orders and the machinery used to select successful candidates. We now consider these issues in turn.

Objections to the honours system: distribution

Political influence

36. In the 1920s, the honours broker Maundy Gregory, encouraged by the Prime Minister David Lloyd George, systematically sold honours to raise money for political purposes. The notorious 1922 Birthday List contained a Barony for Sir Joseph Robinson, a convicted fraudster who had paid Gregory £30,000 for the privilege. The King was concerned enough to write to Lloyd George to ask him to treat honours with more care, criticising the “questionable circumstances” in which awards had been granted. His Majesty continued: “the case of Sir Joseph Robinson ... must be regarded as little less than an insult to the Crown and to the House of Lords and may, I fear, work injury to the Prerogative in the public mind”.²⁵

37. The age of Gregory is long past. Such open corruption is now gone. Yet party donors still receive honours. According to a number of our witnesses, there are still those who try to play the system. The commentator Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, for instance, claimed that there were determined attempts to obtain honours, attempts that she described as proving “a level of corruption”:

“I know someone who made a calculation six years ago that he would pay this amount of money and get his first honour, which he did, and then he would pay this amount of money and get something else, and he would finally be knighted. It was a game plan and it is a game plan he is pursuing extremely successfully, until he gets his final prize, as he does all his other business ventures. There is this whole problem of what is the meaning of an honour, how is it bestowed? And why?”²⁶

38. The journalist Jon Snow, who made a special study of the system after refusing an honour, believed elements of corruption are present, though they are not pervasive:

“The higher the honour, the more open it is to corruption. Certainly we have instances in which peerages have been secured by party donation, which I would regard as fairly clear-cut, particularly dealing with the legal profession, with no

²⁵ Michael De-la-Noy, *op cit*, p 112

²⁶ Q 331

known association with the party until the donation, that kind of thing . I would say, generally speaking, it is pretty clean because it is so obscure”.²⁷

39. However, Gay Catto, the Cabinet Office Ceremonial Officer, who is the system’s chief administrator, told us that the Honours Scrutiny Committee, which considers the propriety of honours where the recipient has made a substantial donation to a political party, today raises only “very occasional” question marks over an award.²⁸

40. Even where there is no financial dimension, honours can be useful to political managers. Professor Peter Hennessy characterised the honours patronage exercised by Prime Ministers as ‘the lubricant of the State’. He gave an account of the way outgoing ministers were offered honours during Prime Minister Harold Macmillan’s drastic Cabinet reshuffle of 1962, seeing it as an example of something very uncomfortable, if perhaps occasionally necessary:

“I was shocked, however—because I live a blameless life—when the file was declassified for Mr Macmillan’s Night of the Long Knives, when he sacked a third of his cabinet. Because the private office feared he might get upset—because he was quite sensitive to butchering people—they had little cribs in front of him which said things like, “Offer Mr Watkinson a CH now and a Viscounty whenever he is ready” at the bottom of the form of words he might use, to soften the blow. That is not corrupt but it is a little bit tricky”.²⁹

41. The political environment in which honours are awarded can benefit some groups and disadvantage others. Journalists are affected in several ways. Mr Major felt that there were “great difficulties with awards for journalists”,³⁰ and recommended none for honours during his time in Downing Street. The accusation is often made that journalistic honours are in effect rewards for political support.

The treatment of state servants

42. We also considered allegations of favouritism towards state servants—especially senior civil servants, diplomats and senior members of the armed forces. This evidence must be seen in the light of the rapidly changing environment for public services. The Government has made no secret of its determination to improve public service performance and to reform the Civil Service to ensure that it is fit for the purpose of delivery. Many of the traditional roles played by senior civil servants—as advisers to ministers, leaders in policy formulation and guardians of the public service ethos—are subject to challenge as new demands are placed on them.

43. Yet, according to some witnesses, public service reform has almost completely failed to touch the honours system. Many expressed particular concern that senior servants of the state, many of them working in Whitehall on policy development rather than on front-line delivery of public services, continue to have a disproportionately good chance of being

²⁷ Public Administration Select Committee, Session 2002–03, *Ministerial Powers and the Prerogative*, HC 642–iv, Q 160

²⁸ Q 261

²⁹ Q 451

³⁰ Q 850

awarded an honour. Those whose contributions are made in the private and voluntary sectors are treated much less favourably.

44. The reasons for this apparent imbalance are largely historical. In the middle ages and for many centuries afterwards, honours were primarily seen as necessary accompaniments to service close to the ‘fount of honour’—the monarch. Inevitably, those who were at court, and in later years those in the wider government service, received far more honours than those outside the royal circle. Their advantage is particularly enshrined in the continued existence of two Orders which are reserved almost exclusively for public servants: the Order of St Michael and St George and the separate Order of the Bath. State servants are additionally eligible for honours in other Orders, such as that of the British Empire, giving them a very good chance of receiving an award. The question is whether this structural advantage should continue.

45. Central to these concerns is the notion of ‘automaticity’, the term used by John Major and others to describe the custom of conferring an honour to go with a particular public sector appointment. Thus a large proportion of permanent secretaries receive a knighthood shortly after taking up their posts, and the same applies to senior ambassadorships such as those in Washington and Paris.

46. The Royal College of Nursing criticised the apparent discrimination in favour of diplomats as “clearly unjustified” and said “state servants should compete on the same terms as everybody else”.³¹ The College believed that it must be possible to break the link between social/employment status and the class of honour received. Similar views were expressed by the Imperial Society of Knights Bachelor, who criticised the “apparent inevitability of honours” for senior public servants. They were also strongly opposed to “disproportionate” numbers of honours for such officials.³² It was suggested by David Graham that, while honours for most people are “completely unexpected and ... therefore highly valued.”, for the civil service and the armed services they are often “planned and expected”.³³

47. The Wilson Review tended to bear this out: “In the home civil service, the diplomatic service and the armed forces, there is a clear correlation between the level of honour and the grade or rank of the recipient. Hence K/Ds go to those who reach the top grade or rank of their service—DSL, four-star and Grade 1/1A—and only rarely to those who do not”.³⁴ It naturally follows that, in some circles, failure to achieve a certain honour is taken as a sign of serious professional or personal shortcomings. John Lidstone reported that “one Major-General told me last week that if he had not got the requisite CB, fellow officers would automatically have assumed that there must be a black mark against his name!”³⁵

48. The need to reward special contributions is, however, well understood by some of those involved in producing recommendations for honours. Professor Sir David King set out the rigorous approach taken by the science and technology selection committee of which he is

³¹ HON 82

³² HON 76

³³ HON 83

³⁴ *Wilson Review: Criteria for levels of honours*, para 39

³⁵ HON 24

a member. To be recommended for an award from the committee, scientists must be outstanding professionals, but they must also have something else:

“My belief is that for each award we have to look very seriously at whether the individual adds lustre to the award as much as to whether the individual is honoured by the award. ... I would say we would be looking for a quality I would describe as good citizenship, so the individual who has made contributions to public life over and above the adornment of themselves through their own career”.³⁶

49. As an example of what was required, Sir David quoted the case of the leading scientists who assisted him during the foot and mouth epidemic. It was a case of something special, service to the state well beyond the call of duty, and certainly well beyond ‘automaticity’:

“They worked with me from the moment I asked them to work with me. They dropped everything and worked with me around the clock—sometimes I was on the phone to them at midnight, three in the morning—and this was a tremendous piece of good citizenship. So I am delighted to say that those people were honoured through the honours system. Do they appreciate the honours? Damn right they do”.³⁷

50. One argument for special generosity to state servants stems from the relative modesty of public sector salaries when compared to those in the private sector. The personal satisfaction of receiving an honour can, it is said, act as some compensation for lack of financial reward. In response to this, several witnesses pointed out that, for top civil servants and some high-ranking local government officers at least, salary levels have improved substantially in recent years, while pension and other benefits have also to be taken into account. Pay in the armed forces has for many years been higher than that for equivalent grades in the Civil Service. On the other hand, the pay of many more junior public servants remains low; in 2002 more than a third of full-time civil servants earned less than £15,000 a year, with the average at just under £17,000.³⁸

51. A sense of proportion is also necessary. Our statistical analysis suggests that the advantage enjoyed by state servants has been diminishing for some time. Reforms of the honours system instigated in the past forty years by Harold Wilson and John Major have been intended to produce a fairer balance between the public, private and voluntary sectors, and they have been partly successful in achieving that aim. Sir Hayden Phillips pointed out that the long-term trend was clearly away from the state sector: “Fifty years ago about 40 per cent of all awards went to Crown servants, ie civil servants, and it is now under 14 per cent. That is a higher percentage than education, which ... last time around was about ten per cent, but the trend is clear”.³⁹

³⁶ Q 128

³⁷ Q 147

³⁸ Cabinet Office, Civil Service Statistics 2002.

³⁹ Public Administration Select Committee, Session 2002–03, *Ministerial Powers and the Prerogative*, HC 642–v, Q 197

Lack of diversity

52. Some witnesses argued that the present honours system entrenched racial and other disadvantage and regional and class divisions. The former Prime Minister, John Major, whose 1993 reforms were partly aimed at promoting his version of ‘the classless society’, suggested that more still had to be done, telling us “We need also to address issues such as diversity, and the ... under-representation of minorities”.⁴⁰

53. The Wilson Review of 2000/01 concluded that the current nomination process, established under the Major reforms, “has struggled to generate enough female and ethnic minority candidates” and that indicative targets for greater diversity were not working effectively.⁴¹ Our own statistical research lends strong support to the suggestion that race and gender can determine whether (and what kind of) an honour is received.⁴² It suggested that, although 7.9% of the UK population at the 2001 census were black or of minority ethnic origin, only between 4.2% and 7.0% of awards went to people from such backgrounds. Especially in the “senior” categories of honours (CBE and above), those with ethnic minority backgrounds appear noticeably less likely to be successful than white people. According to the figures, women also benefited less than men from the reforms introduced by John Major in the 1990s.

54. Class divisions were thought by some witnesses to be exacerbated by the use of titles.⁴³ Professor David Cannadine urged us to look across the Atlantic for historical lessons:

“In a meritocratic society which (at least in some quarters) aspires to be classless, is it appropriate to perpetuate the hierarchical archaisms of ‘lord’, ‘lady’ and ‘sir’? When the United States won its freedom from Britain, the founding fathers did not abolish honours, but they did abolish titles”.⁴⁴

55. Sometimes whole groups were said to be disadvantaged. In one case social and regional discrimination appeared to be reflected in the approach to sporting honours. The All-Party Rugby League Group (representing a sport played largely in the north of England), argued that the allegedly unfair treatment of the sport’s players and coaches by the honours system stemmed from long-standing and “quite open hostility from what might be described as the British establishment ... an excellent example of the way such a system can be argued to exacerbate social divisions”.⁴⁵ The Group pointed to a recent Parliamentary Answer which “gave a league table of the awards to sportspeople over the last five years with rugby union at the top with 52 and rugby league at the bottom with ... one”.

56. More broadly, our figures (Annex) reveal significant differences between the nations and regions of the UK when it comes to honours. The north west of England appears to fare worse than the inhabitants of any other English region when it comes to honours. Containing 11% of the population, it receives only 7% of the awards. Yorkshire and

⁴⁰ HON 95

⁴¹ *Wilson Review: Nominations*, para 14

⁴² See Annex.

⁴³ HON 40

⁴⁴ HON 53

⁴⁵ HON 91

Humberside, with 8% of the population, is slightly luckier, with 6% of awards. Scotland receives 13% of awards despite having just 9% of the population, and Northern Ireland (3% of the population) gets as many awards (6%) as the much more populous Yorkshire and Humberside. London and the South East have only 27% of the population but 31% of awards.

57. In addition to these broad statistical patterns, there are significant differences between the levels of award made to those whose nominations come via the various honours committees. It appears from our analysis that the chances of a senior honour are good if the candidate emerges from the fields of science and technology or the arts, but less good if the recipient's service has been largely local.

“Window-dressing”, stardust and the cult of celebrity

58. Many voices were raised against the number of awards to celebrities, and Lord Hurd's was among them:

“There is a temptation, particularly for Prime Ministers, to blur the essential distinction between celebrity and distinguished service. Prime Ministers and those who advise them should not be afraid of producing a “dull” honours list. They should be aware that the system becomes corrupted if they seek to gain glitter for themselves by honouring people who are already household names. A brilliant footballer or a world famous pop star is not necessarily deserving of an honour, even though the award would be acclaimed by every tabloid newspaper”.⁴⁶

59. The honouring of celebrity also has a long pedigree in the history of the Order of the British Empire. When the first ever list with names of recipients of the Order was being considered in the summer of 1917, David Lloyd George, the then Prime Minister, was said to have pressed for it to contain some recognisable figures. Sir Frederick Ponsonby, Keeper of the Privy Purse, referred to the inclusion of such people as ‘window dressing’, “to make the new Decoration attractive”.

60. Peter Hennessy recalled the dictum of a later Prime Minister:

“The late Harold Wilson used to say, when presented with civil service style drafts of who the deserving were: “I want to sprinkle a handful of stardust through here”—and some would say Harold, on occasion, overdid it”.⁴⁷

61. A recurrent theme in submissions to us was the way in which the inclusion of ‘celebrity’ names of assorted kinds was thought to bring the honours system into disrepute. In contrast to the individual prominence of such honours are the collective efforts of teams. Scientists often produce their best work in small groups, and we heard evidence that some were uneasy with being singled-out for honours while others who contributed to research success were left out.⁴⁸ But it is not just scientists who are affected. Maurice Frankel, who

⁴⁶ HON 73

⁴⁷ Q 431

⁴⁸ HON 87

was honoured for his campaigning work on freedom of information, told us of his discomfort at being approached, and welcomed the idea of collective honours:

“Yes, I think that would have been a lot better from my point of view, because there have been people who have worked for years at the campaign, as well as me, who have moved on, but it is a collective endeavour actually by the organisation”.⁴⁹

Objections to the present honours system: process and format

62. Some witnesses expressed doubts over the integrity or effectiveness of the processes by which recommendations for honours are made. Others argued that the system was unnecessarily complicated, which made it almost impossible for the public to understand.

A poorly-understood anachronism?

63. It was suggested by a number of our correspondents that there were too many Orders with too many gradations and that few could understand the differences between the various degrees of knighthood or between the status of the Order of Merit and the Companion of Honour.⁵⁰ Important distinctions, such as that between the Orders in the personal gift of the Queen and those which are conferred on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, were easily blurred amid the complexity of the system.⁵¹ “Republic”, the Campaign for an Elected Head of State, sharply attacked current arrangements for their obscurantism and lack of accountability:

“The system exemplifies and publicly reinforces the unhealthy symbiotic relationship between the prime minister and the unelected Head of State i.e. enabling both parties to share the power and the glory while avoiding any attributable responsibility or personal accountability (the sovereign as ‘fount of honour’ acting on the advice of the prime minister)”.⁵²

Imperial elaboration—“For God and the Empire”

64. Some saw the system, with all its ramifications and acronyms, as a remnant of a bygone imperial age. Professor David Cannadine has argued that the system as it is today partly owes its origins to the need to bind the elites of the Empire together. The Order of St Michael and St George, infinitely adaptable, was conferred on senior political figures in many parts of the Empire in the later years of the 19th century. Recipients included Prime Ministers from Canada and Newfoundland, Indian princes, Malayan sultans, Sudanese sheikhs and Nigerian emirs. Cannadine sees this as “an emphatic sign that they were being treated as social equals” whatever their colour or culture “and this common lust for titles brought together the British proconsular elite and the indigenous colonial elites into a unified, ranked, honorific body—‘one vast interconnected world’”.⁵³ Today, however, the

⁴⁹ Public Administration Select Committee, Session 2002–03, *The Work of the Ombudsman*, HC 506–i, Q 92

⁵⁰ HON 59 and HON 35

⁵¹ HON 46

⁵² HON 13

⁵³ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British saw their Empire* (London, 2001), p 88

need to join together the Empire's elites has gone, leaving a system that is, according to Professor Cannadine:

“far too elaborate and far too imperial for the downsized, post-imperial nation that Britain has become since 1945/47. ... Now the British Empire has gone, it is no longer appropriate to have the most widely-distributed Order named after it”.⁵⁴

65. Professor Cannadine was not alone in his criticism of the system's reminders of Empire. Mr Lidstone also suggested that imperial titles no longer had any relevance, drawing a parallel with the fate of Indian Empire Orders following partition and independence from Britain:

“two orders of Knighthood, the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India, designated by the letters KCSI and created in 1861, and the Imperial Order of the Crown of India, designated by the letters KCIE and created in 1877; no knights of either order have been appointed since India was proclaimed independent and partitioned into India and Pakistan in 1947. Obviously to appoint anyone to any of these three orders of knighthood today would be absurd. If the absurdity of this is accepted then:

Why should the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire continue to be awarded when there is no British Empire?”⁵⁵

66. Ironically in the light of what appears to have been the intention of its founders (to bind elites of different races together under the banner of Empire), many now see the concept of “Empire” as racially divisive. For Ms Alibhai-Brown this issue came to have a strong personal resonance. As she told us, she originally accepted an MBE to some extent because of the situation of her family:

“Of course, the older generation of migrants, for whom life has been so tough ... for them it is a mark of reassurance. For my mother it was that we would not be deported, because she was so worried that I am such a controversial figure that, having been thrown out of Uganda, we were going to be thrown out of here”.⁵⁶

67. However, when the poet Benjamin Zephaniah returned his MBE, Ms Alibhai-Brown began to see the force of the argument against “Empire”:

“But when Benjamin Zephaniah did what he did, several things happened to quite a lot of us who were ex-members of the Empire, if you like, that in a sense we had colluded in something we did not agree with in spite of being unhappy for a number of reasons, not just because of the word “Empire” ... it is completely unacceptable that we glorify a period like that where so many of us are now British in our hearts”.⁵⁷

68. Jon Snow told us of the case of Gus John, a prominent educationalist of Afro-Caribbean origin who refused a CBE in 2000:

⁵⁴ HON 53

⁵⁵ HON 24

⁵⁶ Q 331

⁵⁷ Ibid.

“He turned it down because he regarded the Commander of the British Empire as being part of the “iconography of British imperialism”. As he had fought his whole life trying to unpick the consequences of British imperialism, he felt it was a pretty serious dishonour to have to wander round the planet henceforth as a Commander of the very institution he had tried to demolish”.⁵⁸

69. These are not new sensitivities. Those who helped to create the insignia (or ceremonial ornament) of the Order in 1917 were well aware of the resonance of the words. Elinor Halle, the designer of the insignia, told an official that the original proposal for the motto “For God and Empire”, was not quite right, and suggested that it should be “For God and **the** Empire”. She argued for this change of wording, she said:

“not only because it filled the space better, but because it struck me afterwards that ‘the Empire’ means our Empire as it exists, while ‘for God and Empire’ might be taken to mean aspirations towards a universal Empire, which might ruffle the feelings of other nations, but I daresay I am wrong”.⁵⁹

70. After considering the question, the King agreed with Miss Halle, and the insignia’s motto today still refers to “the Empire”.

“Hang on, I wonder how they got an honour?”: civil servants, ministers and the honours machinery

71. The question of ministerial accountability for the operation of the system was also raised. The precise involvement of ministers in the honours system is difficult to assess. We had interesting evidence on this point from two former sports ministers. In their experience, departmental civil servants played the pivotal role in the honours process. Lord Monro told us:

“As Minister for Sport in the Department of Environment from 1979–81 I felt the Minister’s recommendations were not given sufficient weight by the Sports Scrutiny Committee. I believe the Minister should at least see the proposed final list and other suggestions if necessary.

“As Minister for Sport in the Scottish Office 1992–95 I found the situation somewhat better in that the Civil Servants discussed the candidates for awards. Again the Minister did not see the final list before publication.

“The Situation continued with other Departments with which I had responsibility—Agriculture, Environment and Fishing. I believe Ministers have a duty to look closely at awards, but not of course either a definite approval or rejection”.

72. For Kate Hoey MP, sports minister in the Department of Culture, Media and Sport from 1999 to 2001, finding out about the DCMS honours machinery was a voyage of discovery:

⁵⁸ Public Administration Select Committee, Session 2002–03, *Ministerial Powers and the Prerogative*, HC 642–iv, Q 127

⁵⁹ PJ Galloway, *The Order of the British Empire* (London, 1996), p 84

“I became particularly interested in the Honours System when, shortly after I was Minister, the first round of honours came out ... and there were lot of names on it that I thought, “Hang on, I wonder how they got an honour”. I then decided I would like to find out how it worked”.

73. Further investigation revealed a complex world of sub-committees:

“There is a sub-committee, a group, within my Department (the DCMS) who received all the names that came in from people, the applications; people writing in from the public via the Cabinet Office comes back to DCMS. Then, I think, it seems to be up to the Secretary of State and the Permanent Secretary to decide how much we knew. Certainly I saw names circulating as to the ones that the Department were going to put forward to the Cabinet Office Sub-Committee. I then discovered there was an Honours Sub-Committee on sport specifically, and I then discovered who the Chairman of that was, and, having been rather annoyed that a particular person got an honour, or one or two particular people, which had been nothing to do with me, but, as I was Sports Minister, people were coming up to me and saying, “Why on earth did so and so get an Honour?” and, “Why has not so and so got an Honour?” I then made some enquiries and discovered quite a little bit about who was on this Sports Sub-Committee”.⁶⁰

74. There are alternative views. The former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Kenneth Clarke, concluded that honours recommendations could take up too much time, and then took steps to prevent this.: “When I was in the departments I tried to avoid everybody taking a disproportionate amount of time over this ... I was quite determined that I was not going to waste hours of my life, which you could easily do, in interminable discussions about who you were giving Honours to”.⁶¹

75. As well as collecting a large proportion of the available honours, senior civil servants therefore play a considerable role in the selection machinery. In 2000, the Wilson Review calculated that 22 out of 54 members of the honours committees were civil servants.⁶² However, because of multiple memberships, civil servants occupied 55 out of the 89 places available, and all of the members of the leading Main honours committee were civil servants. This scale of involvement by senior civil servants in the process is in stark contrast to the arrangements in Australia and Canada, where non-civil service members predominate on the selection bodies.⁶³ Diversity, or the lack of it, is also an issue. The Wilson Review vividly describes the UK honours committees’ membership as “a predominantly white, male elderly elite”. Out of 54 members of the UK committees, only 15 were female and four from an ethnic minority. The average age was 60.

The Blakemore Case

76. There has also been attention to the manner in which civil servants operate the machinery. In December 2003, leaked documents from the Main Honours Committee

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Q 515

⁶² *Wilson Review: Committee Membership*, paras 13–14

⁶³ See below paras 112, 113

appeared to suggest that Professor Colin Blakemore, Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council, had been turned down for an honour because of his views on animal experimentation. In a series of evidence sessions, we sought to establish how such remarks found their way into the record, and what influence they may have had on the decisions of the honours committees. Professor Blakemore told us of his anger when he read the leaked remarks:

“My first reaction was, and, I have to say, it was the reaction of many people, including Lord Sainsbury, that this must have been a comment from an ill-informed civil servant detached from Government attitude and Government views”.

77. Later, in various conversations with those involved in the process, Professor Blakemore was, he told us, reassured :

“I gather that they were informal notes, never meant to be released, so I do not think one should be too critical of drafting accuracy or the depth of analysis in those notes”.

78. We also sought explanations of the process from Professor Sir David King, Head of the Office of Science and Technology and a member of the Science and Technology Honours Committee, and that committee’s Chairman, Sir Richard Mottram, Permanent Secretary at the Department of Work and Pensions. They supported the account given by Professor Blakemore, without leaving us much clearer about the reasons for the appearance of the offending comments. Sir David asked: “Where did that phrase come from? I believe the secretary wrote it down. I cannot believe that the committee expressed that view”.⁶⁴ Nevertheless he had great confidence in the Committee’s composition and judgement:

“a committee composed of three senior civil servants, six very distinguished scientists ... I do not think anyone looking at the committee if the membership was published would question whether that committee could make the right decision in relation to the science, medicine and technology communities”.⁶⁵

79. Sir Richard put the summary containing remarks about Professor Blakemore into context:

“this was a 1300 word summary of a three-hour discussion ... it is therefore a highly compressed version of a much longer discussion and in a number of cases the media discussion, not just in relation to Professor Blakemore, actually took individual sentences from this record, played them up, drew inferences from them which were to my knowledge in a number of cases misleading in relation to the discussion of the Committee, but it is quite difficult for me to prove that to you without revealing the discussion of the Committee”.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Q 98

⁶⁵ Q 102

⁶⁶ Q 615

The Prime Minister's Role

80. The Prime Minister and his Office play a significant part in the production of the list that bears his name; it is passed through Downing Street's hands before it goes to Buckingham Palace, and the Prime Minister can add and subtract names at that stage. The Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence have parallel responsibilities for their own, much smaller lists.

81. Mr Major demonstrated his interest in the honours system both in his 1993 reforms and his proposals to this inquiry. Other Prime Ministers have also been closely involved. Ms Hoey felt that such involvement was sometimes misjudged:

“I personally think that footballers who have trashed dressing rooms or done things like that in the past should not get an Honour, but sometimes those particular people are very popular and therefore may well be added by Downing Street because they would appeal to what Downing Street would feel were, you know, young voters who might be attracted to vote Labour or perhaps, in the case of the previous government, Conservative”.⁶⁷

82. Mr Major pointed out, on the other hand, that in many ways the Prime Minister acts not as the author of the lists but rather as a constitutional postman:

“The prime minister's list is much misunderstood ... When people refer to the prime minister's list there is presumption that the prime minister sits down, rolls his sleeves up, reaches for a bit of paper and writes down the names of millions of people. It really is not that way at all. The prime minister has constitutional ownership of the list. It is not a list produced personally by the prime minister”.⁶⁸

A lack of transparency

83. There was criticism of the fact that the names of the members of the honours committees and other details of the system are not made public. For Jon Snow

“The process is extraordinarily obscure. No single person who has anything to do with the honours system appears to know quite how it works. I was not ever able to find anybody who could take us from Z to A”.⁶⁹

84. Sir Hayden Phillips explained the thinking behind the present policy:

“The view so far has consistently been that apart from the senior civil servant who co-ordinates and leads the operation—now me, formerly the head of the home Civil Service—all the rest of the names of those who advise should be kept confidential simply on the grounds that in an area like this the risk of people wanting to lobby individuals for particular honours for particular people is real”.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Q 520

⁶⁸ Q 845

⁶⁹ Public Administration Select Committee, Session 2002–03, *Ministerial Powers and the Prerogative*, HC 642–iv, Q 127

⁷⁰ Public Administration Select Committee, Session 2002–03, *Ministerial Powers and the Prerogative*, HC 642–v, Q 191

85. This reticence about the system also extended to the internal Wilson Review, which was written in 2000 and 2001. It was only published at the end of 2003 after a request from this Committee. Peter Hennessy claimed to know what happened to the Review in the meantime:

“Sir Richard Wilson genuinely wished to use it as the basis of a reform plan to be put to Tony Blair ... but a succession of crises—from foot and mouth disease to wars—distracted Wilson’s (and others’) attention”.⁷¹

86. In 2003 Sir Hayden Phillips described the Wilson Review to us in surprisingly downbeat terms, saying that it was “more of a stocktaking about where things were rather than saying ‘Let us tear everything up and have a fundamental look at all sorts of issues’”.⁷²

87. The Parliamentary Answers given to Mr White (see para 12 above) have thrown a useful light on the resources devoted to honours work in individual departments, but even here transparency has not been total. The Ministry of Defence, which produces its own list, is very unforthcoming about its honours team, saying in response to a Question that “No record is taken of the time each person or group is involved with this work”.⁷³

Titles and the House of Lords

88. It has been recommended in the past, by the Royal Commission under Lord Wakeham and others, that honours should be clearly separated from positions as legislators in the second chamber.⁷⁴ This was the clear implication of our own proposals for a largely elected second chamber, published in 2002.⁷⁵ Although we do not intend to comment again on the reform of the House of Lords, we noted that uncertainties over the status of the peerage continue to be a cause of confusion in the honours system. Professor David Cannadine outlined some of the main issues:

“The confusion about appointments is unsatisfactory, reflecting the ambiguous position of a peerage as being simultaneously an honour and a power position. Why are they awarded both to recognize merit and as political appointments? There is the further difficulty that the future (and nature) of life peerages is inescapably bound up with House of Lords reform. If the House of Lords remains a wholly nominated second chamber, will this make all appointments ‘political’? If the House of Lords is elected, will peerages continue to exist at all?”⁷⁶

89. We heard evidence from a number of witnesses that the name-changing honours, those which conferred a title such as ‘Sir’, posed special difficulties. Professor Peter Harper told us of his dilemma on being offered a knighthood:

⁷¹ Peter Hennessy, “Tower of Bauble”, *The Tablet*, 20/27 December 2003

⁷² Public Administration Select Committee, Session 2002–03, *Ministerial Powers and the Prerogative*, HC 642–v, Q 233

⁷³ HC Deb 30 June 2004, col 353W

⁷⁴ Royal Commission on Reform of the House of Lords, *A House for the Future*, Cm 4534, January 2000, Recommendation 127

⁷⁵ Public Administration Select Committee, Fifth Report 2001–2002, *The Second Chamber: Continuing the reform*, HC 494

⁷⁶ HON 53

“I was fortunate to be awarded a knighthood in the recent list, so my experience might be relevant. I nearly declined it as I had no wish to be called ‘sir’, but after thought decided to accept but not to use the title ... I ... would suggest that removing the title ‘sir’ would be an excellent thing; it would remove the element of snobbery that tends to surround such titles, while retaining the honour involved”.⁷⁷

90. Simon Jenkins, the former Editor of *The Times*, also prefers not to use the title ‘Sir’:

“I felt, as I think many people now feel, that it should be possible to receive a prize without having to wave it in everyone’s face. Other people feel differently, and I respect their view, but I just prefer to be a common citizen with everybody else ... I am against changing people’s names such that they walk about town and country declaring themselves to be different from their fellow men. I think it should be possible to accept the merit of either the nation or your colleagues without doing that”.⁷⁸

91. These ‘reluctant’ knights appear to be in good and historic company. In 1916, a small but powerful committee, including the Permanent Secretary at the Home Office and the Private secretary to the Prime Minister, recommended to the Cabinet an “Order of the Empire” which would have five “classes” or levels of award, but no knighthood attached to any of them. Another member, Sir Frederick Ponsonby, said that “the general feeling seems to be that it is a distinctly good idea” to avoid knighthoods in the new, more ‘democratic’ Order. He prayed in aid a number of distinguished Conservative figures:

“There are a large number of people who dislike knighthoods, not only the Labour members, but such men as Arthur Balfour (First Lord of the Admiralty and a former Prime Minister), Walter Long (President of the Local Government Board), etc.”⁷⁹

92. In the event, the final Order of the British Empire included not one but two awards which changed names to Sir or Dame, but it is clear that this was by no means a foregone conclusion, and that such titles were not automatically seen as beneficial.

93. Professor Cannadine, however, cautioned that, while there were strong arguments in favour of abolishing titles, we needed to exercise caution in considering such a move in the light of the position of existing peers, knights and dames:

“If it were suggested that in future honours should not carry with them titles, that would still leave, as it were, the baggage of the past (that is, all those at present with titles, some of whom have earned them, some of whom have inherited them) and I think it would not lie consistently if one took the view that in future there will be no titles but, nevertheless, we will stay with the titles that are already here. I think the Committee would need to address that question”.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ HON 100

⁷⁸ Q 485, Q 486

⁷⁹ Galloway, *Order of the British Empire*, p 7

⁸⁰ Q 442

A system that is not “joined-up”

94. It also became clear during our inquiry that the honours system is not well equipped to detect and reward certain types of public service. One problem is that it favours those whose contribution is made in one or two major and easily identifiable roles—a senior official who has spent many years in one department, perhaps, or someone who has been a leading figure in just one charity. The system, which is based to a great extent on departmental recommendations, is not especially effective at monitoring the “all-rounder” who might do substantial work for seven or eight charities or local bodies. Mr Major outlined his concerns to us in this way:

“One area where the present system of nomination fails is that it operates too much on a “silo” basis and people whose service stretches across more than one area can often be overlooked. The problem is that none of their *individual* activities may reach the benchmark for an Award although their *cumulative* contribution may well do so. As a result they may fall through the net: this is unfair”.⁸¹

95. Neither is the system attuned to some of the realities of life. There is a convention that people should not be considered for honours connected with their work after a certain point. In practice, we understand that this means that they need to be recognised while they are still at work or within six months or so after their retirement. If they are missed at that point, they are very unlikely to be recognised later. This was seen by some as being unfair. It was put to us that there should be no constraints of this type, which are effectively based on age, on access to honours.

⁸¹ HON 95

4 Options for Reform

96. In this chapter we examine the case for reform of the honours system, in the light of criticism of existing arrangements, and consider some of the specific proposals that have been put to us.

97. In Chapter Two we described the historical arguments for leaving the system broadly unchanged. However, we also received evidence from a number of witnesses which supports a very different interpretation of the facts. According to this analysis, the honours system has, over the past two centuries, been subject to necessary and regular reform in response to great events and underlying social change. Despite its medieval and monarchical roots, such historians and commentators see the honours system as being eminently capable of recreating itself to meet contemporary needs. Philip Collins of the Social Market Foundation was among those who interpreted the facts in this way:

“There is a perfectly good conservative argument which says simply that institutions evolve and adapt reflectively to changing circumstances, and that the honours system is wildly out of kilter with the kind of nation that we have become. The imperial example is an obvious one. We should remember too that this system as we now have it is a relatively modern invention. The OBE, under which most awards are currently given, was invented in 1917. We are always reinventing our nation and our institutions; they are not as old as we would like to claim they are”.⁸²

98. The reform proposals which emerged from our inquiry can be divided into two main categories. Some recommended modest improvements to the present system, aimed mainly at enhancing its transparency and the diversity of recipients. Others argued for more radical and systemic changes. There were some, but not many, demands for complete abolition.

Proposals for limited change

99. There were a number of suggestions for improvements to the operation of the system at the margins, without challenging its core assumptions. Mr Heydel-Mankoo, urging greater openness, argued that citations should be published:

“Publication of a citation is another means by which an individual can be honoured. It permits a wider audience to learn of the individual’s achievements. The publication of citations will also enable the population to better understand the criteria required for receipt of an award and, hopefully, can serve to inspire others. Such citations might also enable individuals to become community role models”.⁸³

100. The opportunities offered by devolution also appealed to Mr Heydel-Mankoo, who proposed separate Welsh, Scottish and English honours:

⁸² Public Administration Select Committee, Session 2002–03, *Ministerial Powers and the Prerogative*, HC 642–iv, Q 127

⁸³ HON 54

“In light of UK devolution, regional/local honours may be a possible solution to the problem of increasing honours amongst the under-represented portions of the population. Direct inspiration may be drawn from the honours systems in place in the Canadian provinces. Separate Scottish, Welsh and English honours would be a welcome addition to the honours system ... regional medals could certainly be struck: *St. Andrew’s Medal* or *Medal of Scotland* would be appropriate”.⁸⁴

101. In the same spirit of local initiative, some argued that Lord-Lieutenants should play a more active role. The precise influence on the system of these important local figures continues to be obscure and our attempts to obtain oral evidence from them were unsuccessful. However their impact appears to be modest. A letter from William Chapman, Appointments Secretary in the Prime Minister’s Office, lists five “main duties” of a Lord-Lieutenant including the “presentation of medals and awards on behalf of Her Majesty”, but no mention is made of any advisory role in the selection of recipients.⁸⁵ J B Ogilvie suggested that recommendations should be “taken out of the hands of the Government of the day” and “brought down to county level with the Lord-Lieutenant chairing a committee of carefully selected people”.⁸⁶ Lord Monro saw the current limitations on the role of Lords-Lieutenants as a missed opportunity to give the system greater local credibility:

“Much more weight in the CBE-OBE-MBE area should go to the recommendation of the Lord Lieutenant. I had 34 years of experience as an MP and had an excellent relationship with successive Lords Lieutenant ... the Lords Lieutenants know more about local affairs than Civil Servants”.⁸⁷

102. Lord Thomson of Monifeith, Chairman of the Honours Scrutiny Committee, urged us to recommend the abolition of his committee, because very similar work was now being carried out by the House of Lords Appointments Commission:

“it might be simpler in our view and more straightforward if these duties were carried out by privy councillors within the new statutory Appointments Commission, where, as it happens, Baroness Dean and Lord Hurd [members of the Honours Scrutiny Committee] are already members. We continue to exist in an odd way as a matter of history but it really makes little sense, certainly in my personal view, to have two separate bodies carrying out such similar functions”.⁸⁸

103. Bronwen Manby made the case for a change to the procedure by which honours were awarded. At present, potential recipients are sent letters stating that they have been recommended for an award, and asking whether they would accept. Ms Manby felt that this took away much of her pleasure in the award:

“Individuals should not be given the formal option of choosing whether to accept. Of course, in the end, anyone can send the award back. But the current system requires

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ HON B/P 17

⁸⁶ HON 72

⁸⁷ HON 64

⁸⁸ Q 249

you to assess not only the acceptability of the system itself, but also your own worthiness—which is not something I found a pleasant experience ... Mostly, I just wish I hadn't been asked. This is presumably not the desired effect".⁸⁹

104. The Wilson Review made some recommendations for ways of ensuring that the honours system becomes better known. These ranged from "A campaign to increase the general public's awareness of their right to nominate people for honours, accompanied by some clear and simple material on what the honours system is for and the sort of service and achievements we are seeking to recognise and celebrate" to "a pilot in one of the regions to see if the quantity and quality of nominations could be improved by calling for nominations to be made on a regional basis".⁹⁰ Other "Wilson" proposals included a database of past recipients to encourage nominations and a better website for the Cabinet Office Ceremonial Branch. A number of other witnesses contributed similar suggestions.

Proposals for radical change

105. The proposals for more radical changes came from a variety of sources and were directed at a range of issues. We here identify the main ones.

Changing the Orders

106. There were a number of calls for radical restructuring of the Orders of Chivalry. We were presented with a raft of proposals for fundamental reshaping of the honours system, some quite detailed. These ranged from calls for wholesale abolition of orders to demands for new orders to reflect the changes that have taken place in society since the last reform at the time the institution of the Order of the British Empire in 1917.

107. One of the more radical plans was advanced by R J Malloch, who urged the abolition of Orders of the British Empire, St Michael and St George and the Bath. The degrees of baronet and knight bachelor would also "become redundant, and no further appointments would be made". The Orders of the Garter and the Thistle would be retained, but any further awards would be confined to foreign heads of state.

108. Another radical proposal was made by Republic, the Campaign for an Elected Head of State, which argued for a complete abolition of the current honours and their replacement by a system in which: "the elected Head of State would award national honours to British citizens in an appropriately solemn ceremony symbolising Britain's belief in representative democracy".⁹¹ Rt Hon Tony Benn made a proposal for honours decided by a parliamentary committee.⁹²

109. Both Mr Major and Professor Cannadine said that consideration should be given to the cessation of further appointments to the Order of St Michael and St George and the Order of the Bath. Professor Cannadine reasoned that "since Britain is no longer a great imperial or military power, it is no longer sensible to have two orders exclusively for

⁸⁹ HON 97

⁹⁰ *Wilson Review: Nominations*, para 15

⁹¹ HON 13

⁹² HON 12

diplomats and warriors and civil servants”. Mr Major, in the interests of ending ‘automaticity’ and apparent bias towards state service honours, told us that:

“One option for the future would be to abolish the special Orders only available to civil servants, military etc (eg Order of the Bath) or to severely cut them back so that Awards are proportionate in number to those offered to other groups”.⁹³

110. The thinking behind these proposals is well caught in this passage from the Wilson Review:

“It may be that every state servant who receives an honour fully deserves it and that state service as a whole warrants its overall share of the honours. However, this not only needs to be so; it also needs to be seen to be so. At a time of written contracts and performance-related pay, there seems to be at least a prima facie case for state servants taking their chances in the honours stakes alongside their fellow citizens from other walks of life, competing against them on terms of greater equality”.⁹⁴

111. We are also aware of other radical views. Andrew Adonis, now a senior policy adviser in the Prime Minister’s Office but then a columnist with *The Observer*, put forward radical proposals for reform of the honours system in June 1997. Mr Adonis’s recommendations included an end to new awards in the Order of the British Empire, a “revamped” Order of Merit which would essentially take its place and, to choose the names, “an independent council, making its recommendations to the Queen without intervention from Downing Street”. In his view “Apart from reducing prime ministerial control, a broadly-based council would also ensure a wider spread of honours”.⁹⁵

112. There are indications that Mr Adonis’s views were at that time shared by the Prime Minister. A press report in that same month of June 1997 suggested that Mr Blair planned “a fundamental shake-up of the honours system to give it more independence” including the possibility of “an honours commission that would compile a list of names which the Prime Minister would send directly to the Queen without intervention by himself or his staff”.⁹⁶ The radical theme re-emerged a year later when in June 1998 *The Sunday Times* claimed that “the Government is preparing to perform the last rites over the British Empire by replacing the word ‘empire’ with ‘Commonwealth’ in honours awarded by the Queen”.⁹⁷

The end of Empire?

113. The Wilson Review recommended that the Order of the British Empire should be replaced by a new Order of Britain. Lord Hurd feared that the proposed name “would be regarded as flat and flavourless”, and it did not attract support from our other witnesses.⁹⁸

⁹³ HON 95

⁹⁴ *Wilson Review: Oversight*, para 32

⁹⁵ *Observer*, June 1997

⁹⁶ *The Times*, 5 June 1997

⁹⁷ *Sunday Times*, 7 June 1998

⁹⁸ HON 73

114. The idea of changing the name to the Order of British Excellence appears to be more popular.⁹⁹ One correspondent said that it would helpfully “keep the headline of the Awards undisturbed” and would “highlight the very thing for which the Honours is being awarded, i.e. excellence of one sort or another”.¹⁰⁰

115. Mr Major also backed the idea of an Order of British Excellence. This view was a direct reversal of his opinion of 1993, when he told the House that he could “see no advantage or purpose in changing the Order of the British Empire”. Today, he told us:

“Although that argument still has force I believe it is now out of date. In order to remove one of the persistent criticisms of the system, I would now be inclined to propose an “Order of British Excellence” with Awards at the level of Companion (i.e. CBE), Order (OBE) and Member (MBE). This is minimum change for maximum effect. It retains the familiar abbreviations whilst removing reference to an Empire that no longer exists. It does have an awkwardness with Northern Ireland, but no more so than now”.¹⁰¹

116. Professor Cannadine also argued for this renaming of the Order, “thereby keeping the same acronyms and abbreviations”. It “should be recognized as the one national honour, apart from those in the sovereign’s gift. Knights bachelor should be incorporated in it”.¹⁰²

117. On the other hand, Dr Galloway was unimpressed by the case for change in the Order. He identified a period—the 1960s, which saw the independence of many British colonies in Africa and elsewhere—when it was understandable for there to be pressure to rename the Order, to make it appear less “imperial”. More recently, however, Dr Galloway believed that the justification for change had weakened. Its very meaninglessness had, he believed, given the Order of the British Empire a new lease of life:

“the further the British Empire recedes into the sands of time, the less embarrassed people will feel in referring to it. By 2017 when the Order of the British Empire celebrates its one-hundredth birthday, its name will have no more meaning than the name of the Order of the Bath—a reference to the obsolete mediaeval rite of purification before admission to knighthood”.¹⁰³

Ending titles

118. It was suggested that titles such as “Sir” and “Lady” should be abolished, and that future honours should be confined to awards which do not change the names of recipients. Professor Cannadine said that ceasing to award titles would be quite possible:

“I do not think that an honours system which just carries, as it were, letters after the name is incredible or unworkable ... the way for class to go away is for people to stop talking about it, and then it disappears. One hundred years on, if there are no titles in

⁹⁹ HON 97 and Q 381

¹⁰⁰ HON 05

¹⁰¹ HON 95

¹⁰² HON 53

¹⁰³ HON 61

this country nobody will ever imagine what it was like to have had a system where they existed”.¹⁰⁴

119. Miles Irving argued strongly against this view, reasoning that titles were valuable in denoting certain sorts of outstanding service:

“my main point in writing to you is to caution against the abolition of the titles Sir or Dame on the grounds that they are socially divisive. If this excuse is used then all other ancient titles should be abolished on the same grounds.

“Examples of ancient titles currently in use (with the dates of first use taken from the OED) are: Reverend(1486), Father(1300), Canon(1205), Doctor(1303), Professor(1517), Captain(1375), Colonel(1583), Bishop(1382) and Justice, (1172)”.¹⁰⁵

More independence and diversity in the selection process.

120. The Wilson Review proposed an influx of independent members onto honours selection committees, with a requirement that appropriate proportions should be female or have an ethnic minority background.¹⁰⁶ Several other submissions supported the idea that names should be recommended by an independent body free of ministerial influence, and with non-civil-servants taking the lead.¹⁰⁷

121. A number of other countries have very strong non-civil service representation on their honours selection bodies. Sometimes outsiders are in the majority. The Council of the Order of Canada, for instance, is chaired by the Chief Justice of Canada, and its members are the Clerk of the Privy Council, the Deputy Minister of the Department of Canadian Heritage (the latter two being civil servants), the Chair of the Canadian Council for the Arts, the President of the Royal Society of Canada, the Chair of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada and two members of the Order who are appointed for a maximum term of three years. On other occasions the bodies are more balanced between officials and others. In the 1960s President Kennedy changed the composition of the board that recommends candidates for the United States Presidential Medal of Freedom, bringing in five members from outside government to complement the five members from within the executive.

122. The Council for the Order of Australia has 15 members: community representatives for each of the eight States and Territories appointed on the advice of the State Premiers, four members appointed on the recommendation of the Prime Minister (one of whom must be able to represent aboriginals and one of whom serves as Chairman) and three ex officio members, the Chief of the Australian Defence Force, the Secretary of the Department of Administrative Services, and the Vice President of the Federal Executive Council. The characteristics of the first twelve members are laid down so that the politicians are constrained to recommend people who will be accepted as representative of

¹⁰⁴ Q 464

¹⁰⁵ HON 66

¹⁰⁶ *Wilson Review: Committee membership*, paras 44–47

¹⁰⁷ HON 52

and sensitive, to the interests of the general community. Among other things, there must be a 50:50 male-female balance on the Council.

123. Professor Hennessy urged us to consider recommending a separate list in which Prime Ministers could continue to exercise their patronage, which he described as their “adventure playground”. Meanwhile the rest of the honours system could concentrate on selection on merit:

“if Mr Blair and his successors could have an adventure playground within which they could put their political patronage, the lubricant of the State, so that those who were purist about it and felt contaminated by being approved of by No. 10 could be considered for honours by an independent commission, genuinely independent, which was separate from either of the adventure playgrounds (the head of State’s and the head of Government’s) and would then syringe as much as possible patronage out of the system and inject as much merit into the system as possible”.¹⁰⁸

Increasing transparency

124. There was a range of opinion about the naming of members of the honours committees. Among those cautiously prepared to contemplate greater openness about members’ names was Sir Richard Mottram, Permanent Secretary of the Department of Work and Pensions, who gave evidence to us in his capacity as chairman of the Science and Technology Committee. There were strong arguments on both sides, he told us, and the judgement was a finely balanced one:

“personally, Chairman, I think it would be better if ... the names of this committee were disclosed, yes ... I have talked to members of the committee about whether we would all be comfortable with having our names disclosed ... but the argument against it ... is whether, if the names were disclosed, some people would be very reluctant to be involved because they would get caught up in lobbying and back-biting and the politicking that goes with these sorts of things, and bad-mouthing about bias and so on ... the up side obviously is we can have a discussion where you could say we do or we do not think these people are distinguished”.¹⁰⁹

125. Another witness with long experience of the system, Mr Major, believed that committee names should remain confidential:

“In Government, I was shocked at the extent to which a minority of people were prepared to lobby for Honours and, in some cases, at the extent to which they became disaffected if their petition was ignored. Neither the Committee—nor anyone else—should be exposed to such pressure”.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Q 434

¹⁰⁹ Q 679

¹¹⁰ HON 95

5 Conclusions

126. In reaching our conclusions, we have measured the honours system against the principles we set out in Chapter One. We have asked whether it properly rewards excellence, and whether it demonstrates integrity, transparency, dignity, clarity and fairness.

127. It is a mixed picture. We have found that there is widespread public acceptance of the value of the awards made in the Order of the British Empire. This part of the system is respected as a dignified and appropriate way of rewarding achievement, and helps to make the country “feel good about itself”, to use the words of the Wilson Review. It has in many ways fulfilled the democratic hopes expressed at the time of its introduction in the early part of the last century. Nor is there evidence of the pervasive and systematic corruption of the system that destroyed its reputation in the 1920s, when Parliament had to legislate to ban the buying and selling of honours. The safeguards introduced then and the changed environment of public life have in most cases been effective in maintaining the integrity of the process.

Ministers and patronage: the need for more transparency and independence

128. However, we share the unease expressed by a number of our witnesses at the continued award of honours to donors and others who have rendered political or similar service. There was special concern about the use of honours as the ‘lubricant of the state’, and some scepticism at the claims of those who run the system that it is entirely based on merit. The regular conferral of knighthoods on Members is sometimes viewed, cynically, as a mere tool of political party management. This invites unflattering comparisons with countries such as France and Canada, which exclude serving members of their parliamentary bodies from receiving certain honours. The hereditary baronetcy conferred by Mr Major on Sir Denis Thatcher, an award which appears to have caused Mr Major some discomfort¹¹¹, is just one example of the difficulties faced by British Prime Ministers.

129. This makes the honours themselves more vulnerable to criticism. Even though the Prime Minister is often seen as merely providing a rubber stamp for the work of the Cabinet Office when he passes his list to Buckingham Palace, the danger is that the appearance of political involvement can tarnish the system. Lloyd George and Harold Wilson both suffered blows to their standing because of the way they dispensed honours, but the reputation of honours was damaged too. After more than a quarter of a century, the odour of Wilson’s notorious ‘lavender list’ still lingers, however faintly. As well as tainting public life, this is unfair on the many thousands of deserving holders of honours.

130. One of the main reasons for this problem is the continuing failure to make the system transparent. While accepting that individual decisions must remain confidential, we are frustrated that so much of the process is still secret. Our inquiry revealed a system that is out of date and out of line with good governance. The Nolan reforms of the 1990s, setting out principles for the proper conduct of public business, have had a profound and salutary

¹¹¹ Q 888

impact on public life. In particular, Nolan made clear the need for greater transparency about decision-making in the public sector. The passage of the Freedom of Information Act has taken the process further, and even the security services have recently become more open. But the honours system remains a bastion of the ‘need-to-know’ culture. In other countries, such reticence is not thought to be necessary for the administration of the honours system.

131. Our investigations into the case of Professor Blakemore demonstrated the disadvantages of keeping the system largely secret. Once the controversy had become public, it would surely have been prudent for officials to explain to us the sequence of events. Despite our efforts, however, the nature of the honours committee discussion about Professor Blakemore and the status of the disputed minute remained obscure. Committee names are still kept confidential. We found it hard to give the system a clean bill of health because parts of it remained, and still remain, a mystery to us and to the general public.

132. The evidence of Ms Hoey and Lord Monro raises serious questions about another aspect of the system; the nature and extent of ministerial accountability. In some cases, ministers have only a hazy idea of how their own department’s system works, and are not in a position to defend or explain the outcomes. Prime Ministers are rarely forthcoming about their own very active involvement in the process. If ministers are neither willing nor able to account for their stewardship of the honours system, there is no reason why they should continue to play such an important role in it.

133. Neither is there enough independent scrutiny in the system. The balance between civil servants and others on the honours committees favours insiders—and insiders who are also largely unaccountable. We were repeatedly assured that the independent members of the honours committees were of the highest distinction and probity, yet the fact that they are anonymous makes it difficult to prove that the system is fair. A much more robust and transparent guarantee of integrity is required.

A system that lacks clarity and accessibility

134. If public support for the honours system is to be maintained over the long term, it needs to have a clearer, simpler structure. We found that few people have any grasp of the difference between a CB and a CBE, or why some people become GBEs, some KBEs and some are simply Knights Bachelor. Name-changing honours are especially baffling, and carry connotations of social divisiveness. Simon Jenkins and Peter Harper were among those distinguished people who were delighted with the recognition of a knighthood but unhappy at using the title; a number of members of the House of Lords exhibit a similar sort of discomfort and avoid using their titles. Increasingly, titles appear to be an embarrassment rather than a cause for celebration. As we have noted, many other Commonwealth countries have abandoned knighthoods and other name-changing titles, without damaging their public life in any noticeable way. It is perfectly possible to recognise different levels of contribution to the community without conferring knighthoods—a fact acknowledged by Lord Curzon nearly a century ago when he considered proposals for the Companion of Honour.

Rewarding excellence? Favoured treatment for some state servants

135. We considered carefully the treatment of state servants by the honours system. In one sense, the honours that are conferred on the most successful—the permanent secretaries, generals and ambassadors—can be seen as appropriate recognition of their distinction and achievement. From that point of view, such honours uphold our principle of excellence, rewarding the outstanding qualities which are necessary to make it to the top. The numbers involved are by definition very small and do not reduce the chances of others being honoured.

136. On the other hand, the seemingly automatic nature of the awards, the sense that they are expected and assumed, creates a feeling of unfairness and undermines the credibility of the system—especially when senior civil servants are so prominent on the honours committees. The argument that honours are needed to compensate for low state pay is hardly conclusive; in strict logic, it would mean that those in paid employment in the voluntary sector (where salaries are often very modest) should be treated with even greater generosity. Privileged access for state servants is something of an anachronism. The original historical justification for favourable treatment has weakened as the Nolan principle of selection on merit has established itself as an integral part of public life. The practical utility of some honours also appears dubious. Lord Hurd’s view after many years in the Foreign Office, was that ambassadorial knighthoods were simply not necessary to the proper conduct of diplomacy, while a former ambassador’s wife described to us her husband’s unsuccessful battle to avoid acquiring one.¹¹²

137. A recurrent theme in the evidence to us was a general dislike of honours being given to someone simply for doing their job. It was thought that something extra should be required (as in Sir David King’s reference to ‘good citizenship’). We have much sympathy for this view. However the nation will also sometimes want to recognise outstanding achievement in its own right, especially when it brings with it significant public benefit. These considerations make it essential that the criteria for honours, at different levels, are made as clear as possible.

Failing to support public service reform

138. Neither is the system entirely successful in supporting public service reform. There is still too little to encourage those on the front line. While the Government has made admirable efforts to honour properly those who serve the public directly, the lists still appear to give senior policy officials rather too much of what they expect. This Whitehall-centred approach is also out of line with recent Government professions of support for localism, whether new or old.

An anachronism

139. We have paid tribute to the respect in which the Order of the British Empire is generally held. But it suffers from one significant flaw. The presence of the word ‘Empire’ in the title of this most frequently-conferred Order is, we believe, no longer acceptable. The term is thought to embody values that are no longer shared by many of the population.

¹¹² HON 73

140. This is anachronistic and insensitive, an inappropriate symbol for today's Britain. The United Kingdom has an increasingly diverse population, many of them with links to the countries of the former Empire, and they are often uneasy at something that reminds them of imperial domination. Ms Alibhai-Brown and others persuasively argued that this reminder of foreign rule made it more difficult for people to feel 'British in their hearts'. Irrespective of other considerations, the fact that the current nomenclature of honours makes it difficult for some potential recipients to accept them suggests that change is now necessary.

Options for change

141. Having reviewed the evidence, we have identified three options for the future of the honours system. These are:

- No change to the present system, including the Orders and the procedures used to select recipients
- Limited reforms to procedures, aimed at meeting some of the strongest objections, including the lack of diversity among recipients and absence of independent scrutiny in selection procedures
- More radical reform, which could include drastic cuts in numbers of recipients or fundamental changes to the existing Orders and awards.

142. We favour a judicious combination of the last two options. To leave the system unreformed, at a time when parts of it appear out of tune with recent developments in public life and some profound social changes, is not a realistic option. On the other hand we do not wish to destroy a system which brings so much pleasure and expresses public gratitude for so much excellent service. It is an important part of the fabric of our national life.

143. History demonstrates that reform can work. Indeed, evidence from the France of President de Gaulle, who radically reshaped his country's honours system, culling 16 obsolete orders, shows that a ruthlessly unsentimental approach to the honours system can co-exist with fervent patriotism.¹¹³ We were impressed that John Major, who initiated the last concerted reform in 1993, now favours a more radical, though still measured, approach. We believe that he is right, and explain our proposals in the next Chapter.

¹¹³ *Wilson Review: Criteria for levels of honours*, para 46

6 A reformed honours system

144. In this chapter we describe a series of reforms which we believe are needed to ensure that the national honours system adapts to changing circumstances and is consistent with the principles of sound public administration. They include a reshaping of the Orders and significant improvements to the process by which awards are made. Yet they are also firmly in the tradition of prudent re-invention that has characterised the history of the honours system.

A clearer system

145. Our proposals envisage a radical simplification of the national honours system, while leaving untouched the small number of awards which are in the personal gift of the Queen. We recommend in particular a substantial reduction in the number of Orders and levels of award, to make it easier for the public to understand the system and appreciate the reasons why people are honoured.

The Orders for state servants: no automatic awards

146. We believe that the treatment of state servants in the honours system should be radically reformed. If civil servants, army officers or diplomats render outstanding service, they should in future receive due recognition, in fair competition with those in other walks of life. They should no longer enjoy almost exclusive access to their own awards. There should be no room for ‘automaticity’ anywhere in the honours system.

147. The main example of such ‘automaticity’ is the use of the Orders of the Bath and of St Michael and St George to honour state servants. We do not recommend the abolition of these Orders. However, we consider that, like many others before them, they should be consigned to the category of obsolescent Orders. We wish to ensure, nevertheless, that this action does not have unfair consequences for state servants. They should be treated in exactly the same way as everybody else.

148. We recommend that the Government should announce its intention to cease the award of honours in the Orders of the Bath and of St Michael and St George at an early opportunity. The Government should make it clear that in future honours will not be conferred on a person simply because they hold a particular post. Measures should be taken to ensure that these changes do not disadvantage state servants in the general allocation of honours.

The Order of the British Empire

149. We considered what changes might be required to the most widely-conferred national Order, that of the British Empire. We have already set out our objections to the continuing use of the term ‘Empire’ in the title, and recommend that a new approach is needed. Appointments to the Order of the British Empire should cease as soon as practicable, and a new Order should be founded to take its place.

150. The name of the new Order must be chosen with care. There are arguments in favour of the “Order of Britain”, as recommended in the Wilson Review. This would be clear and understandable, and in line with practice in other Commonwealth countries. However, there are also some disadvantages. It is important that any new award should try to sound inspiring. We agree with Lord Hurd’s comment that “Order of Britain” sounds ‘flat and flavourless’.¹¹⁴ There is also history to consider. The introduction of the Orders of Canada and Australia was welcomed in those countries as symbolic of their growing independence from Britain. There would be no such resonance to the Order of Britain, which would sound like a pared-down version of its predecessor. Names matter, and this name seems to have failed to capture the imagination of our witnesses. There was no support for it among those who submitted evidence to us.

151. We now turn to the other main suggestion for a new title, the “Order of British Excellence”. While it might be objected that the new name would sound somewhat contrived, it would have the important advantage of continuity. As the initials would be the same, there would be no need for fundamental change in acronyms and abbreviations; and those already honoured with the CBE or MBE would be less likely to feel that they possessed an outdated award. It would also be a fitting reminder of the fact that the Empire Order was originally described as “the Most Excellent”. Perhaps most importantly, it would actually mean something, embodying our principle that only excellent service or achievement should be recognised in the honours lists. The Government, pledged as it is to build an inclusive society, should take the opportunity to exchange ‘Empire’ for ‘Excellence’ and thereby look to the future instead of the past. No doubt there will be some who will denounce as political correctness what is really just sensible adaptation.

152. We accept, nevertheless, that change must be carried out with care. Dr Galloway points out¹¹⁵ that there are legal complexities in changing old Orders, or setting up new ones. We simply observe in response that the convenient flexibility of the prerogative has been used time and again to amend the honours system and create new Orders. It will doubtless prove possible to use it in this way again. Dr Galloway also urges us to take into account the feelings of existing members of the Order of the British Empire. Given the complex history of the system, in which Orders of different vintages have co-existed happily for generations, we consider such concerns to be exaggerated. We are confident that no-one will see the institution of the new Order (whose name and structure are specifically designed to be as close as possible to those of the old one) as a repudiation of the past. Still less should it be seen as in any way devaluing the service and achievements for which past honours were granted. It is simply that time, and the country, have moved on.

153. We therefore recommend that there should be no further appointments to the Order of the British Empire. A new Order, the Order of British Excellence, should be founded in its place.

¹¹⁴ HON 73

¹¹⁵ Para 30 above

Titles and levels of award

154. In line with this approach, we are not minded to recommend major changes to the most frequently-used levels of award. There should be Officers and Members of the Order of British Excellence, matching directly those ranks in the old Empire Order, and continuing to reflect different levels of service and achievement. But the term ‘Commander’, as used in the CBE, has a militaristic ring which now sits oddly with a largely civilian award. The new Order should therefore have ‘Companions’ instead. This will give a single main national honour, with three clearly-defined levels.

155. This brings us to the question of titles and name-changing honours. We realise that this is a contentious issue. However, if reforms are to be made, it seems to us that it makes sense to devise a comprehensive reform package that will last. This is why we believe it is right to tackle the issue of titles now. Such titles are redolent of past preoccupations with rank and class, just as ‘Empire’ is redolent of an imperial history. Their continued use strikes a false note (which is no doubt why some recipients now prefer not to employ them) and other countries in the Commonwealth and elsewhere have dispensed with them. More importantly, a reformed and modernised honours system, on the lines we suggest, would no longer require titles to mark distinction.

156. It would be entirely consistent with the almost democratic spirit in which the old Order was conceived for the renamed Order of British Excellence to have no knighthoods or damehoods. That would leave the Companion of Honour, suitably, expanded in number, as the single and senior separate award. This approach would also be much more consistent with our principle of clarity. The recent decision of New Zealand to end the award of knighthoods and damehoods confirms that they are not an indispensable part of a Westminster-style honours system.¹¹⁶ We believe, therefore, that knighthoods (including GBEs and knights bachelor) and damehoods should be phased out of honours lists, integrated either into the Companion level of the new Order of British Excellence or into the expanded Companion of Honour list. We assume that those who already have titles will continue to use them if they wish. The knighthoods in the personal gift of the Queen will of course be unaffected by this move.

157. However, the continuing uncertainty over the future direction of the House of Lords poses a difficulty. Professor Cannadine cautioned us against recommending an end to all titles while the situation is so unclear. We take the view that it makes it even more imperative to separate out the honours system from a legislative role in the second chamber. Our reformed honours system would accommodate those for whom the peerage is given as an honour.

158. We might have thought it appropriate to recommend the amalgamation of the Order of Merit and the Companion of Honour, as proposed by a number of our witnesses. However, the Order of Merit is in the personal gift of the Queen and is thus outside our remit.

¹¹⁶ *Wilson Review: Criteria for levels of honours*, para 44

159. The reforms we propose would reduce the number of Orders outside the personal gift of the Queen from five to two, and the total number of acronyms from 15 to just four. Table B compares the current system with the proposed one.

Table B: LEVELS OF AWARD (Except awards in the personal gift of the Queen)

CURRENT SYSTEM	PROPOSED SYSTEM
Knight/Dame Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath (GCB) Knight/Dame Commander of the Order of the Bath (KCB/DCB) Companion of the Order of the Bath (CB) Knight/Dame Grand Cross of the Order of St Michael and St George (GCMG) Knight/Dame Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George (KCMG/DCMG) Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG) Knight/Dame Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire (GBE) Knight/Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE/DBE) Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) Knight Bachelor Companion of Honour (CH)	Companion of Honour (CH) Companion of the Order of British Excellence (CBE) Officer of Order of British Excellence (OBE) Member of Order of British Excellence (MBE)

160. We recommend that the levels of the Order of British Excellence should be **Companion, Officer and Member**. The only other national honour (i.e. except those awarded for gallantry and those in the personal gift of the Queen) should be the **Companion of Honour**. Consideration should be given to a substantial increase in awards of the **Companion of Honour** and to a matching decrease in awards of **knighthoods and damehoods**, with the objective of **phasing out the awards of knighthoods (including knights bachelor) within five years**.

An independent system for making recommendations

161. Closely related to the issue of the award of honours to state servants is the question of the independence of the committees that make the recommendations. We propose the establishment of an Honours Commission, with members to be appointed by transparent procedures in a similar way to the equivalent body in Australia, and publicly named. The Commission should take over the role, currently exercised by ministers, of making honours recommendations to the Queen. The civil servant-dominated honours committees should be abolished. We would expect these arrangements to cover all special honours lists including resignation honours lists produced by prime ministers.

162. The Commission, though, should not become simply a receptacle for the Great and the Good. It would be counter-productive for it to replicate the mistake made by the House of Lords Appointments Commission and appear to be simply another committee of familiar faces. The very disappointing figures on gender balance and on black and ethnic minority representation in the honours lists show that there is an urgent need for action to

make the system fairer to all. See para 119 above. There should be real efforts, like those made in Australia, to produce a diverse and representative as well as expert membership of the honours selection bodies. Representative citizens should play a central role in the process of honouring their fellow citizens.

163. Whatever our doubts about some of the assumptions upon which it is based, we have been impressed by the scrupulous work of the civil servants who support the committees. We would not envisage that staffing arrangements for the Commission would need to be radically different from those in the current Ceremonial Secretariat. More account, however, needs to be taken of the work of those who, as we explained in paragraph 93, are active in a wide variety of fields and fail to attract attention from the committees as presently constituted. The Commission would also benefit from having on its strength a limited number of additional staff who are experienced in encouraging greater public participation and awareness, and good recruitment practice. The transparency of the system should be increased wherever possible, and best practice from other countries should be used as the model. There should be an active role for the Commission in searching out and identifying potential honours recipients, using a range of methods and networks. **We recommend that the Commission examines the Australian system and considers whether it is appropriate to adopt the same methodology in order to achieve greater diversity in the UK honours lists.**

164. The future of the Honours Scrutiny Committee also needs review. For nearly 80 years, since it was established under the Honours (Prevention of Abuses) Act 1925, it has been a useful antidote to misuse of the system. The Committee lost its responsibility for ensuring propriety in appointments to peerages when the House of Lords Appointments Commission was established, and its members told us of their desire to see its remaining functions transferred to that Commission. We do not believe that such a move would be appropriate. The Appointments Commission is focussed on the peerage and cannot be expected to take on responsibility for the much larger and more diverse honours system. We believe that an independent Honours Commission, anchored in and scrutinised by Parliament in the way that we recommend below, should remove the need for the limited extra assurance offered by the Honours Scrutiny Committee, taking a full responsibility for propriety issues. The Committee should be abolished.

165. This implies radical reform of the role played by ministers. They will no longer have responsibility for making recommendations to the Queen or overseeing the operation of the honours committees. We are not convinced by Professor Hennessy's notion of a separate 'adventure playground' in which ministers can continue to award their own honours. This would contaminate the rest of the honours system with the taint of political patronage, and runs the risk of creating a two-tier system, with one sort of honour ethically superior to the other. Ministers should be able to make nominations along with others. Similarly, there is nothing wrong with honours for distinguished political service, but such honours should be considered alongside all other kinds of public service.

166. However, as the advisers to the Queen, ministers should continue to play the central role in setting the policy agenda for the honours system, subject to parliamentary oversight. Indeed, that role should be enhanced. A new system for making recommendations will demand new forms of guidance. The regular publication of such guidance would allow the Government to communicate its policy for the honours system, reflecting changes in

public priorities (such as the emphasis on education after 1997), while removing it from the individual decisions which have caused controversy in the past. The Honours Commission would have to take it into account as guidance but would have the right to take a different view. The Commission would also play a role in those circumstances where forfeiture of an honour was thought appropriate.

167. We see some force in Mr Major's concerns about the pressure which would be placed on the members of the honours selection machinery by the publication of their names. However, in our opinion the benefits of greater transparency outweigh the potential disadvantages and; experience of the more open Canadian and Australian systems does not suggest that the pressure is too burdensome. Nevertheless it should be made absolutely clear that lobbying of a member of the Honours Commission would be both highly improper and counter-productive.

168. We recommend that the honours selection committees should be replaced by an Honours Commission, which would take over from ministers the task of making recommendations to the Queen for honours. It should be established by statute, following the precedent of the Electoral Commission.

169. The members of the Honours Commission should be independent and appointed through 'Nolan' procedures. There should be a requirement on those appointing the members of the Commission to ensure that, as far as possible, its membership should reflect the diversity of the country.

170. The names of all members of the Honours Commission should be published and the Commission's policy on the transparency of its procedures should be based on best practice in similar bodies in other countries.

171. We recommend that the secretariat of the Commission should be similar in size and functions to the current Ceremonial Secretariat in the Cabinet Office, augmented by staff with experience in publicity, recruitment and community involvement, who would be responsible for increasing public awareness and encouraging appropriate nominations for honours.

172. We recommend that the Government should, on a regular basis, set out publicly, as guidance to the Honours Commission, its proposals for the allocation of honours between various sectors of the community in the light of public priorities.

173. We recommend that the Honours Scrutiny Committee should be abolished .

Clearer criteria and more recognition for local service

174. We believe that one way of re-establishing public confidence would be to make more explicit the criteria for the different levels of award. We see no inherent contradiction between the necessarily subjective nature of the judgements made by the honours machinery and the need for clarity and openness about the sort of service that is appropriate. The Wilson Review notes that the Australian government at one time proposed a series of detailed honours criteria which lay equal stress on local, regional and

national service.¹¹⁷ In the interests of transparency, and with a view to giving due recognition to local service, we believe that such criteria would form a useful model for the new Order. The Commission should make it a priority to develop its own ways of discovering people who give outstanding local service, beyond the present reliance on such figures as Lord-Lieutenants in the counties. This should become an opportunity for wider public participation in local life, opening up the nomination process to as many people as possible.

175. We recommend that explicit criteria, along the lines proposed by the Australian government and reported in the Wilson Review, should be published for each level of award in the Order of British Excellence. Like the Australian proposals, the criteria should emphasise that eminent service at local level would be regarded as being just as meritorious as the same sort of service at national level.

The role of Parliament

176. We examined some of the proposals put to us for Parliamentary honours. Such awards would have the advantage of involving Parliament very directly in the system and giving both Houses the opportunity to recognise service that they regard as valuable. However, we found little support for such new awards and some concern that they might lead to political disputes which would jeopardise their dignity. We are not inclined to recommend them.

177. Nevertheless, Parliament should have an important role to play in establishing the reformed system and scrutinising its operation. With the introduction of the Honours Commission, accountability will need to be assured. An annual report should be produced by the Commission, and a select committee, perhaps this one, should be given the responsibility of examining it, and if necessary taking evidence on it and reporting to Parliament on its findings.

178. We therefore recommend that the Honours Commission should submit an annual report to Parliament, and that it should be examined by a select committee of this House.

Reaching out: encouraging diversity and raising awareness

179. Our statistical analysis corroborates other evidence which demonstrates the continuing failure of the honours system adequately to reflect the country's diversity (see Annex). We have considered a number of measures which might help.

180. We would hope that the introduction of the Honours Commission, with its own more diverse membership, would encourage the selection of a more representative range of recipients. It would, however, be naïve to imagine that a better balance would emerge immediately. In the first place, the Commission would be working with the stock of candidates already held by the Cabinet Office; and it is unlikely that this would of itself yield a significantly more diverse list of honours.

¹¹⁷ *Wilson Review: Criteria for levels of honours*, paras 28-29

181. We note that in the past Permanent Secretaries have been urged to increase the proportions of female and minority ethnic recipients, with target figures attached. This does not seem to have brought about a major improvement, but targets should form part of a broader and more concerted strategy to increase diversity.

182. Diversity will not be improved unless there is much greater public awareness of the opportunity to nominate people for honours, especially among under-represented groups. The recommendations on publicity made in the report of the Wilson Review, including a much more informative and user-friendly internet site with case studies of recent recipients and full citations, appear to us to be sensible. They should form the basis of a strategy to raise public awareness of the honours system; and this should also include improved communications with those who have made nominations. We were concerned that many nominators are unaware of the stage that has been reached in the selection process. We accept that this would, initially at least, lead to an increased workload for those administering the system. However, it is difficult to see how otherwise its diversity can be increased.

183. As we noted above (para 56) our figures suggest some puzzling differences between the numbers and levels of awards conferred on those who live in various regions, or whose service has been given in different fields. We believe that a regular, probably annual, check needs to be kept on the statistics so that the work of the Honours Commission is properly informed, and this should form part of the Commission's annual report.

184. Honours should also become less mysterious and inaccessible. One small reform might be the adoption of Mr Major's proposal for a discreet but recognisable 'lapel' badge for recipients of honours¹¹⁸. This would supplement the insignia used on formal occasions and bring the system closer to everyday life, helping to remove the veil of exclusivity which currently surrounds it. It would be a modest public badge of honour.

185. We recommend that the Honours Commission should maintain and publish as part of its annual report a digest of detailed statistics on the honours system, including the regional and ethnic origin of those who receive awards. The statistical analysis in the Annex of this report could form the basis for such a digest.

186. We recommend that the Honours Commission should set indicative targets to ensure that future honours lists reflect more closely the diversity of the UK population.

187. We recommend that the Honours Commission should implement a strategy to increase public awareness of the honours system and encourage more public nominations, based on the recommendations on publicity contained in the Wilson Review of the system produced in 2000 and 2001. A particular emphasis should be placed on attracting nominations for those whose service has been rendered at local level.

188. We recommend that the citations for all honours should be published.

189. We recommend that recipients of honours should be presented with a modest badge or brooch suitable for wearing with non-formal dress.

¹¹⁸ HON 95

190. To meet the point, made above, about the need to recognise collective effort, we believe there is a strong case for developing a system of collegiate honours, in addition to the main honours system.

191. Through this the service and achievement of teams and organisations can be properly recognised. The Queen’s Award for Industry provides a useful model here, and could be supplemented by similar awards (e.g. Educational Achievement, Civic Achievement) across a range of activities and organisations. We consider that a development of the honours system in this way would be widely welcomed and valued, and we so recommend.

192. We believe that our recommendations provide the basis for a genuinely reformed honours system. The system has adapted and reinvented itself in the past, and needs to do so again now. Honours enable society to recognise service and achievement that it values. This is an important function, which is why it is necessary to ensure that the honours system continues to work well. Our recommendations are designed to achieve this. Awarding honours may be inherently subjective, an art rather than a science, but this makes it even more necessary to have an honours system which commands public confidence. From time to time this requires reforms to the system to be made, and of a radical kind. In our view this is such a time.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Orders for state servants: no automatic awards

1. We recommend that the Government should announce its intention to cease the award of honours in the Orders of the Bath and of St Michael and St George at an early opportunity. The Government should make it clear that in future honours will not be conferred on a person simply because they hold a particular post. Measures should be taken to ensure that these changes do not disadvantage state servants in the general allocation of honours. (Paragraph 148)

The Order of the British Empire

2. We therefore recommend that there should be no further appointments to the Order of the British Empire. A new Order, the Order of British Excellence, should be founded in its place. (Paragraph 153)

Titles and levels of awards

3. We recommend that the levels of the Order of British Excellence should be Companion, Officer and Member. The only other national honour (i.e. except those awarded for gallantry and those in the personal gift of the Queen) should be the Companion of Honour. Consideration should be given to a substantial increase in awards of the Companion of Honour and to a matching decrease in awards of knighthoods and damehoods, with the objective of phasing out the awards of knighthoods (including knights bachelor) within five years. (Paragraph 160)

An independent system for making recommendations

4. We recommend that the Commission examines the Australian system and considers whether it is appropriate to adopt the same methodology in order to achieve greater diversity in the UK honours lists. (Paragraph 163)
5. We recommend that the honours selection committees should be replaced by an Honours Commission, which would take over from ministers the task of making recommendations to the Queen for honours. It should be established by statute, following the precedent of the Electoral Commission. (Paragraph 168)
6. The members of the Honours Commission should be independent and appointed through 'Nolan' procedures. There should be a requirement on those appointing the members of the Commission to ensure that, as far as possible, its membership should reflect the diversity of the country. (Paragraph 169)
7. The names of all members of the Honours Commission should be published and the Commission's policy on the transparency of its procedures should be based on best practice in similar bodies in other countries. (Paragraph 170)

8. We recommend that the secretariat of the Commission should be similar in size and functions to the current Ceremonial Secretariat in the Cabinet Office, augmented by staff with experience in publicity, recruitment and community involvement, who would be responsible for increasing public awareness and encouraging appropriate nominations for honours. (Paragraph 171)
9. We recommend that the Government should, on a regular basis, set out publicly, as guidance to the Honours Commission, its proposals for the allocation of honours between various sectors of the community in the light of public priorities. (Paragraph 172)
10. We recommend that the Honours Scrutiny Committee should be abolished. (Paragraph 173)

Clearer criteria and more recognition for local service

11. We recommend that explicit criteria, along the lines proposed by the Australian government and reported in the Wilson Review, should be published for each level of award in the Order of British Excellence. Like the Australian proposals, the criteria should emphasise that eminent service at local level would be regarded as being just as meritorious as the same sort of service at national level. (Paragraph 175)

The role of Parliament

12. We therefore recommend that the Honours Commission should submit an annual report to Parliament, and that it should be examined by a select committee of this House. (Paragraph 178)

Reaching out: encouraging diversity and raising awareness

13. We recommend that the Honours Commission should maintain and publish as part of its annual report a digest of detailed statistics on the honours system, including the regional and ethnic origin of those who receive awards. The statistical analysis in the Annex of this report could form the basis for such a digest. (Paragraph 185)
14. We recommend that the Honours Commission should set indicative targets to ensure that future honours lists reflect more closely the diversity of the UK population. (Paragraph 186)
15. We recommend that the Honours Commission should implement a strategy to increase public awareness of the honours system and encourage more public nominations, based on the recommendations on publicity contained in the Wilson Review of the system produced in 2000 and 2001. A particular emphasis should be placed on attracting nominations for those whose service has been rendered at local level. (Paragraph 187)
16. We recommend that the citations for all honours should be published. (Paragraph 188)

17. We recommend that recipients of honours should be presented with a modest badge or brooch suitable for wearing with non-formal dress. (Paragraph 189)
18. Through this the service and achievement of teams and organisations can be properly recognised. The Queen's Award for Industry provides a useful model here, and could be supplemented by similar awards (e.g. Educational Achievement, Civic Achievement) across a range of activities and organisations. We consider that a development of the honours system in this way would be widely welcomed and valued, and we so recommend. (Paragraph 191)

Annex: Statistical Supplement

Data have been made available to us by the Cabinet office on both awards and nominations over a number of years.

A complete data set is available for all the awards made from the Birthday Honours list in 1999 to the New Years Honours list in 2004. This comprises over 10,000 individual data items and is sufficiently comprehensive to analyse statistically.

Awards

The data on awards are fairly stable over the years and there appear to have been no major changes in the period from the Birthday Honours in 1999 to the New Year Honours in 2004.

Nominations are made by members of the public (about 45%) and also come directly from government departments. When nominations are received, they are examined by subject specialist Committees. The numbers and level of Honours awarded by these Committees are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

	State	Med/S&T	ACI	Maec	Local	Sport	Media	Millennium	PM	Total
GCB	3									3
D/KCB	24									24
D/KBE	2	7	4	15	36	1	2	1	2	70
Kt	15	38	61	39	83	8	10	0	10	264
CH		2		8						10
CB	129									129
CMG	9		9		3					21
sub										
Total	182	47	74	62	122	9	12	1	12	521
CBE	178	105	269	124	315	26	22	3	2	1044
OBE	374	167	477	150	1151	69	43	20	4	2455
MBE	682	138	797	218	4181	223	60	33	35	6367
Total	1416	457	1617	554	5769	327	137	57	53	10387

The columns in the table are as follows:

State—awards made to civil servants

Med/S&T—awards made for services in the field of medicine, science and technology

ACI—awards made for services in Agriculture, Commerce and Industry

Maec—awards made for services to the Arts

Local—awards made for local services

Sport—awards made for services of sport

Media—awards made for services to the Media

Millennium—special awards made in 2000

PM—special awards

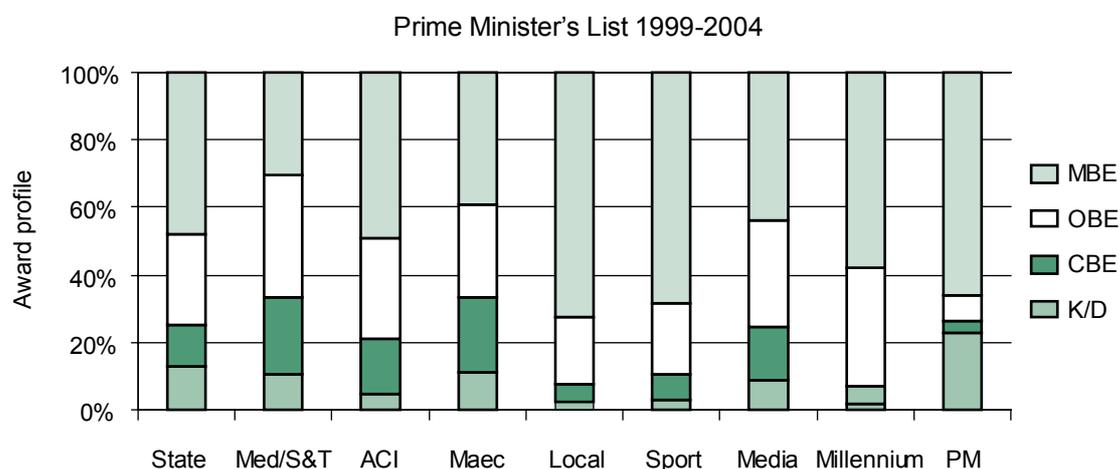
In order to determine whether the differences in the percentage of each type of award made by the Committees are significant, all awards at Knighthood level or above have been

amalgamated. The last two columns have also been excluded from the statistical analysis as the numbers of awards involved are small. However they are all included in the diagram (Figure 1) shown below.

A Chi-squared contingency table test was carried out on the data and the differences in the levels of award made by each Committee were found to be statistically highly significant. The probability that the Committees awarded the same percentage of each type of awards is less than 0.0001. (Chi-Sq = 1135.048, DF = 18, P-Value < 0.0001). We have learned that the Committees are not meant to recommend awards in the same proportion as each other. Each Committee has a broad allocation of awards at each level and they do vary significantly.

The key in Figure 1 refers to MBEs, OBEs and CBEs and K/D represents the amalgamated data for each Honour at or above the Knighthood level.

Figure 1



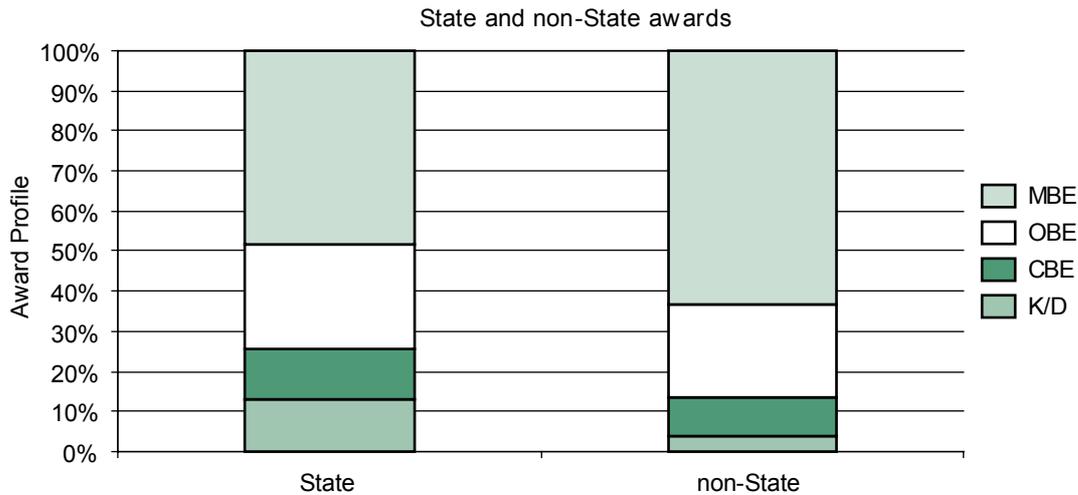
State and Non-State Awards

The data for the level of award for state and non-state honours is given in Table 2

Table 2

State	Non-State	Total	
182	339	521	K/D
178	866	1044	CBE
374	2081	2455	OBE
682	5685	6367	MBE
1416	8971	10387	Total

Figure 2

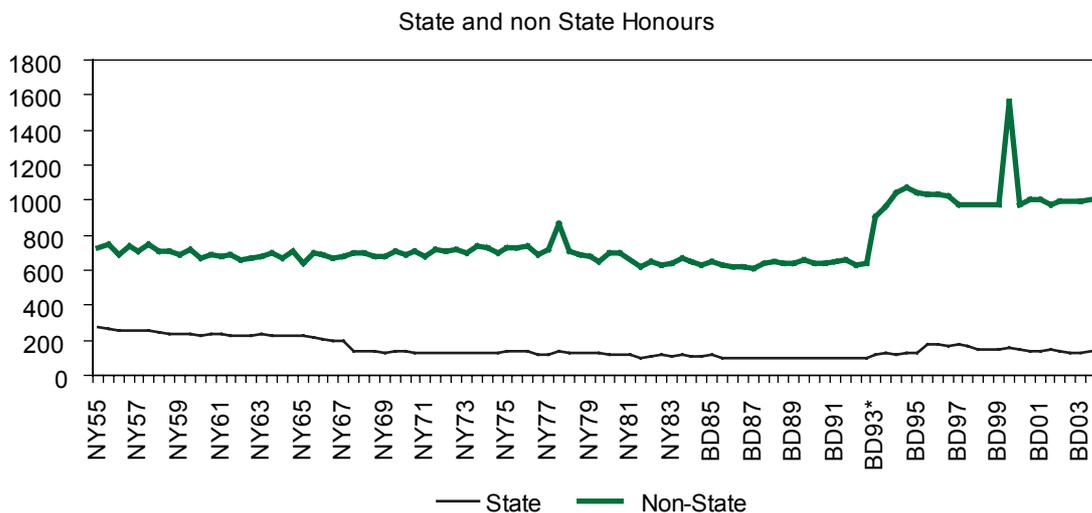


The data are illustrated in Figure 2.

A chi-squared contingency table test was carried out on the data and the differences in the levels of award made to state servants and members of the public are statistically highly significant. The probability that each category receives the same percentage of each type of award is less than 0.0001. (Chi-Sq = 262.78, DF = 3, P-Value < 0.0001).

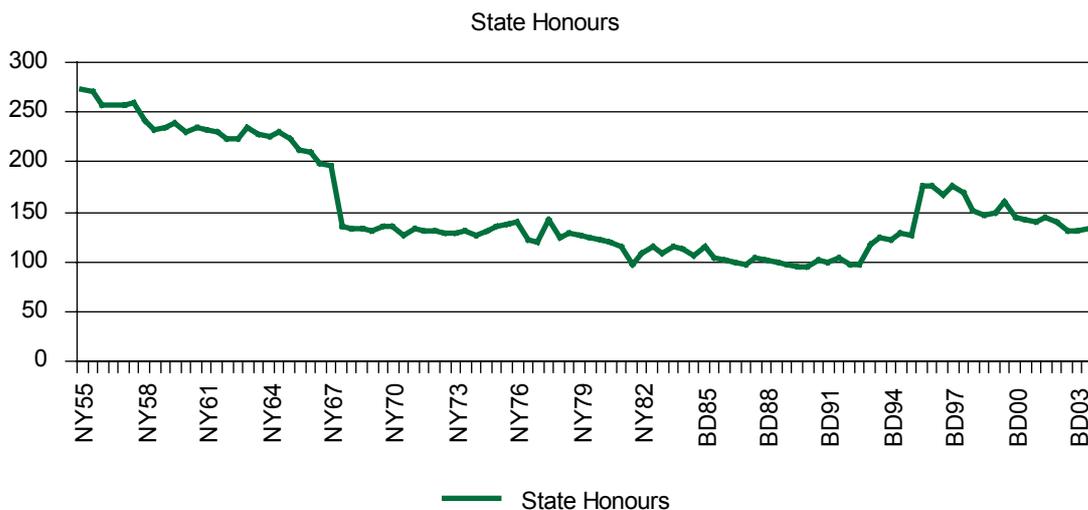
Data are also available on the numbers of state and non-state awards made between 1955 and 2004 and these are illustrated below in Figure 3.

Figure 3



There are peaks shown in Honours to the public at the time of the Queen’s Jubilee celebrations in 1977 and again at the Millennium in 2000 when additional awards were made. In 1966, Harold Wilson’s reforms to the Honours system resulted in a sharp decline in the numbers allocated to state servants. This decline can be seen more easily in Figure 4, which shows only the State awards. There is also an obvious and continuing increase in the number of awards made to the public in 1995. This was as a result of the changes made to the system by the then Prime Minister John Major. The British Empire Medal which had hitherto not been included in the Honours list became an MBE and was included after 1995.

Figure 4



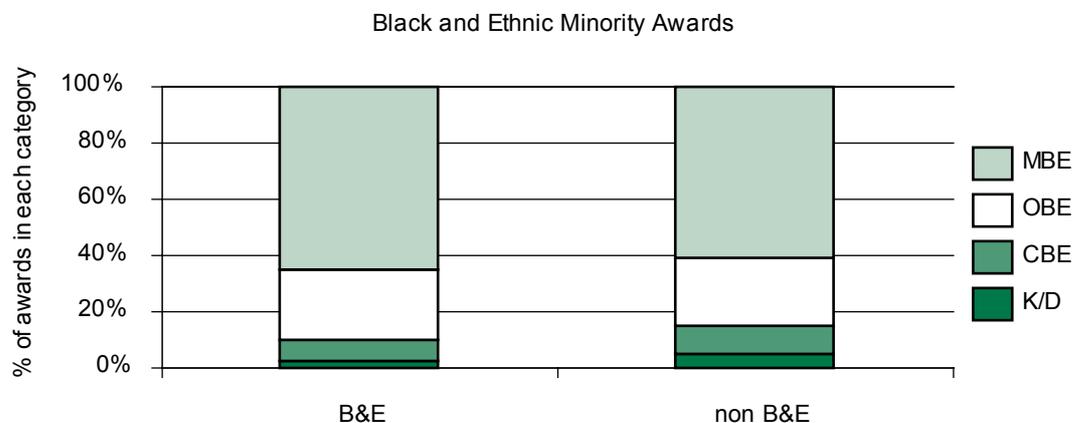
Black and Ethnic Minority Awards

The ethnicity of the recipient of each award is included in the data from 1999 to 2004 and this is shown in Table 3. However, this has been declared by the nominator rather than the recipient and may be subject to error.

Table 3

	B&E	Non-B&E
K/D	14	507
CBE	42	1004
OBE	147	2308
MBE	378	5989

Figure 5



The differences in the two categories are less noticeable than the differences between the different awarding Committees. However, these differences are still statistically significant. (Chi-Sq = 15.415, DF = 3, P-Value < 0.001). There are significant differences between the categories of awards to Black and Ethnic Minority people and others.

According to the 2001 census the percentage of black and ethnic minority in the UK is 7.9%. But the percentage of black and ethnic minority people receiving awards varies from 4.2% to 7.0% of the awards made.

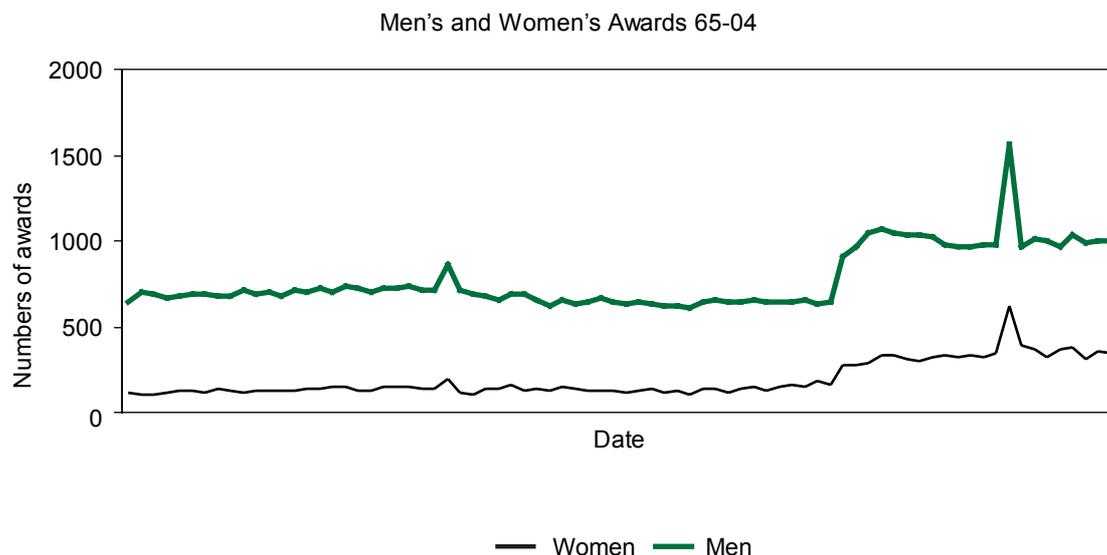
Data on nominations made are also available but these are less reliable. The Cabinet Office receives around 6000 nominations each year and a random sample of around 300 has been extracted. From the usable sample of 292, 14 are of unknown ethnic origin. Of the remaining 278, 17 are Asian and 3 are black. This indicates that about 7.2% of the nominations come from a black or ethnic minority background. However this is subject to an error of plus or minus 3%, and is too unreliable for conclusions to be drawn.

Awards to Women

Data on the awards made to women and men are available from 1965 – 2004 and are illustrated below in Figure 6. The peaks evident in previous data are also obvious here. However, it appears that women did not benefit from John Major's reforms of 1995 as much as the men. It is possible that women received fewer British Empire Medals and therefore the numbers were not increased to the same extent when this became an MBE.

The percentage of the awards made to women varies from 14.5% to 40%.

Figure 6



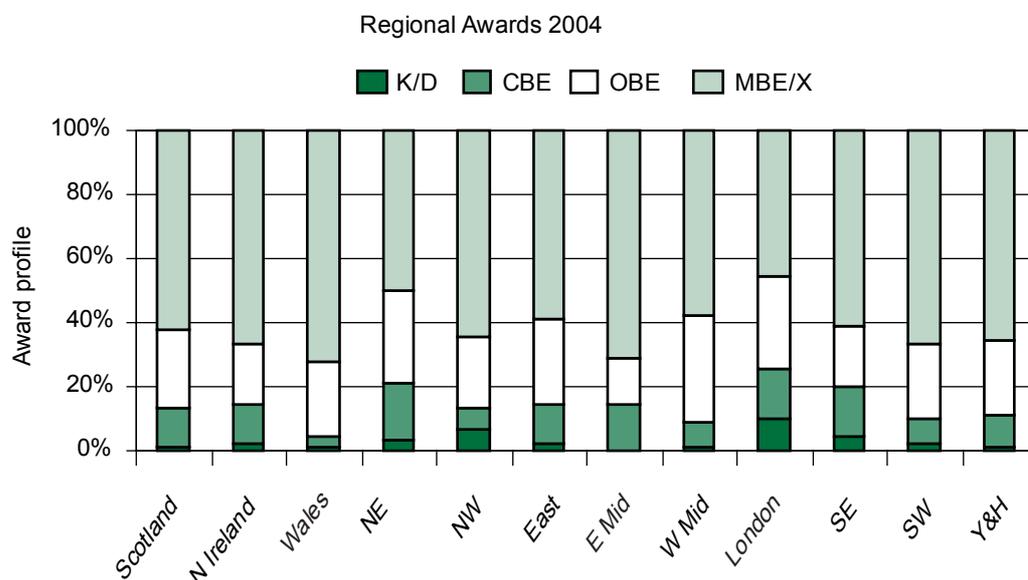
Regional Awards

Data on the level of awards for each region are available for three years 2002–2004. These are given in Table 4 and illustrated in Figure 7.

Table 4

	K/D	CBE	OBE	MBE
Scotland	2	15	29	77
N Ireland	1	5	8	28
Wales	1	2	14	45
NE	1	5	8	14
NW	4	5	14	42
East	2	9	20	44
E Mid		7	7	34
W Mid	1	5	21	37
London	14	23	42	67
SE	7	28	33	105
SW	2	6	20	56
Y&H	1	6	15	41

Figure 7



The differences appear to be large but the numbers are too small for any statistical analysis of the whole table.

One submission we received suggested that Scotland did badly in terms of its share of the higher awards. In order to test whether this was the case in 2004, the data has been tabulated for Scotland against the rest of the UK. This is given in Table 5. The statistical analysis did not reveal any significant differences between Scotland and the rest of the UK in the level of the awards given. (Chi-Squared = 1.64, Degrees of freedom =3, not significant)

Table 5

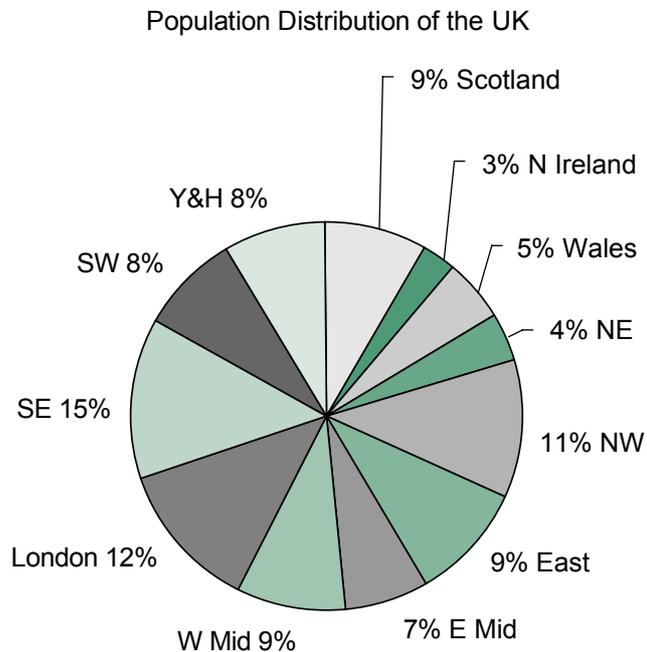
	K/D	CBE	OBE	MBE	Total
Scotland	2	15	29	77	123
Rest of UK	34	101	202	590	927
Total	36	116	231	667	1050

The population of the UK is distributed as follows in Table 6 and illustrated in Figure 8:

Table 6

	Pop (m)
Scotland	5.05
N Ireland	1.70
Wales	2.92
NE	2.53
NW	6.79
East	5.45
E Mid	4.21
W Mid	5.3
London	7.24
SE	8.08
SW	4.96
Y&H	5.01

Figure 8



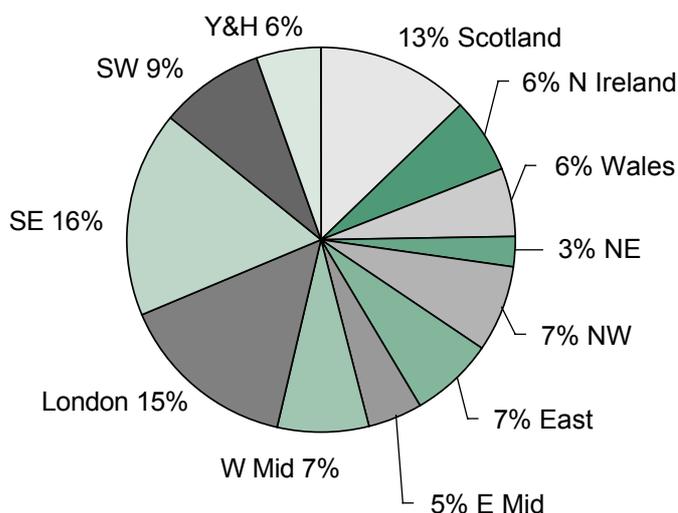
Regional data are available for the Birthday Honours list 2003 and the New Year's Honours List for 2003 and 2004. These are given in Table 7 and illustrated in Figure 9.

Table 7

Scotland	NY2004	NY2003	BD2003
N Ireland	123	126	119
Wales	42	73	65
NE	62	49	57
NW	28	27	21
East	65	70	69
E Mid	75	51	75
W Mid	48	52	41
London	64	73	76
SE	146	148	143
SW	173	166	159
Y&H	84	81	86
Scotland	63	47	51

Figure 9

Regional Distribution of Awards 03 - 04



It is noticeable that there are some large winners and losers. Scotland receives 13% of the awards but has only 9% of the population of the UK. Northern Ireland does well with 6% of the awards and only 3% of the population. London and the South East receive 31% of the awards but have only 27% of the population. The main loser is the North West. The North West received 7% of the awards and has 11% of the population.

The differences between the regional distribution of the awards and the regional distribution of the population are highly statistically significant. (Chi-squared = 343.8, Degrees of freedom = 11, $p < 0.0001$)

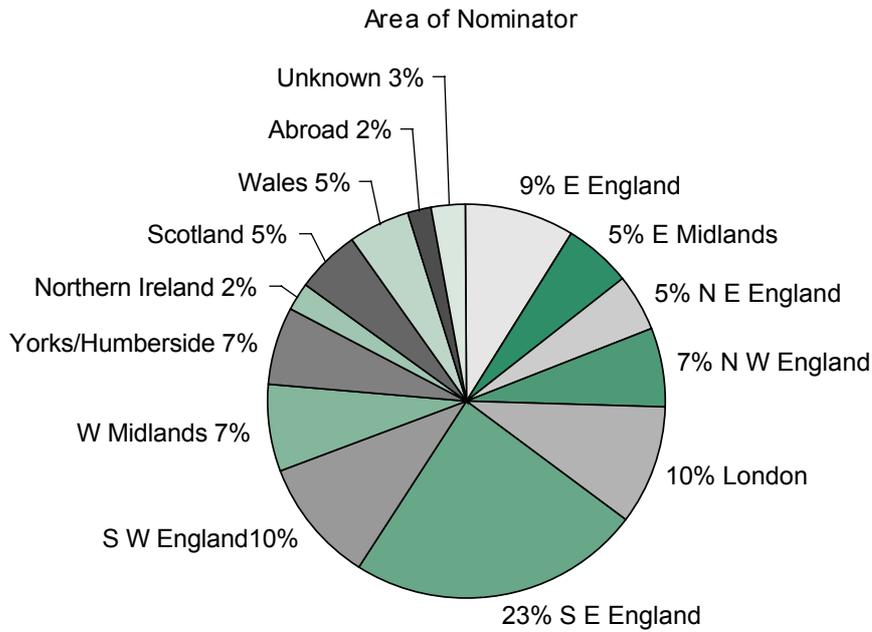
Nominations

The remaining data are taken from those nominations received in a single month in 2003. These were nominations emanating from England. All the nominations from elsewhere in the UK go to the devolved administrations. Table 7 and Figure 10 show the regional distribution of the nominators.

Table 8

Area of Nominator	
E England	26
E Midlands	16
N E England	14
N W England	19
London	28
S E England	69
S W England	30
W Midlands	21
Yorks/Humberside	19
Northern Ireland	6
Scotland	16
Wales	14
Abroad	6
Unknown	8

Figure 10



33% of the nominations come from London and the South East, but those regions have only 27% of the population.

Occupation of Nominees

Table 8

Occupation of Nominees	
Occupation	
Armed forces	3
Benefactor	6
Business	20
Ceremonial	1
Church	1
Construction	4
Cultural	21
Domestic	5
Education	41
Environment	11
Government	14
Health	71
Legal	9
Literature	1
Media	8
Out of time	22
Public Services	16
Sports	14
Unknown	20
Work in Industry	2
Youth	2

Figure 11

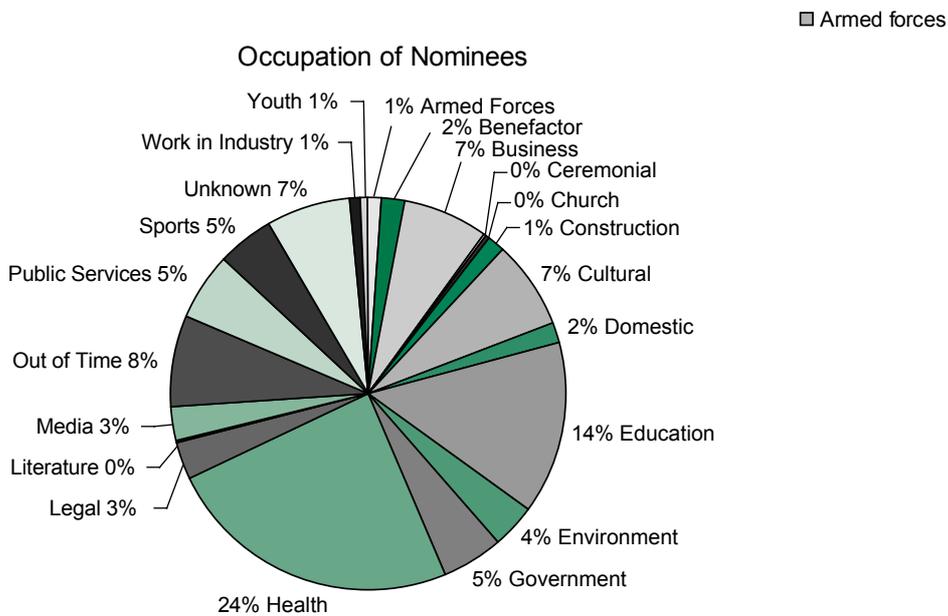


Table 9

Activities Nominated for

Animal Welfare	4
Benefactor	12
Business	2
Church Activities	6
Cultural	16
Education	8
Law	4
Elderly	13
Environmental	6
Black minority work	3
Forces charities	6
General voluntary	43
Health	32
Paid job	106
Religious activity	1
Sport	12
unknown	4
Youth work	14

Figure 12

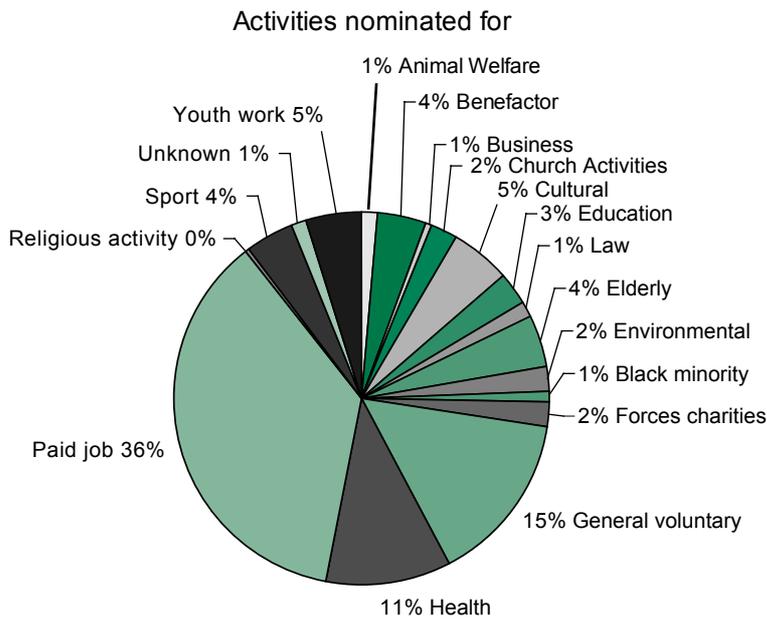


Figure 13

Age distribution for successful awards (2004)

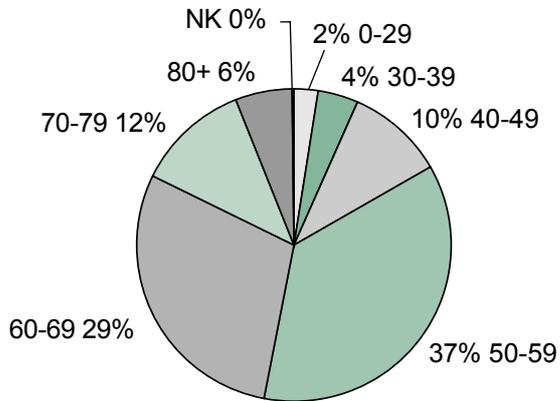
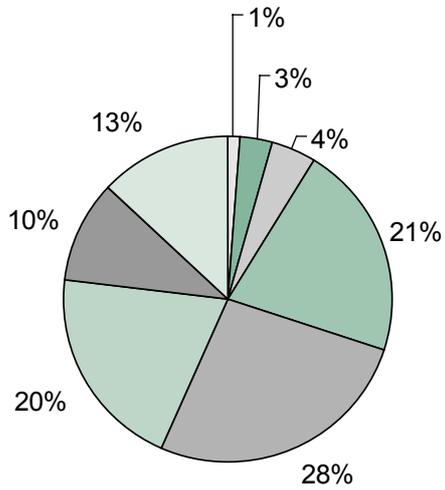


Figure 14

Age Distribution for Nominees



Formal minutes

Wednesday 7 July 2004

Members present:

Tony Wright, in the Chair

Mr Kevin Brennan	Mr Kelvin Hopkins
Annette Brooke	Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger
Mrs Anne Campbell	Mr Gordon Prentice
Sir Sydney Chapman	Mr Brian White
Mr David Heyes	

The Committee deliberated.

Draft Report (A Matter of Honour: Reforming the Honours System), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 154 read and greed to.

Paragraphs 155 to 157 read.

Amendment proposed, to leave out Paragraphs 155 to 157 and insert:

“We recommend that the levels of the Order of British Excellence should be Knight/Dame, Companion, Officer and Member. The only other national honour (except those awarded for gallantry and those in the personal gift of the Queen) should be the Companion of Honour.

“These reforms would reduce the number of Orders outside the personal gift of the Queen from 5 to 2 and total number of acronyms from 16 to 6. Table B compares the current system with the proposed”.—(Sir Sydney Chapman).

Question put, That the Amendment be made.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 1

Sir Sydney Chapman

Noes, 8

Mr Kevin Brennan
Annette Brooke
Mrs Anne Campbell
Mr David Heyes
Mr Kelvin Hopkins
Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger
Mr Gordon Prentice
Mr Brian White

Paragraphs agreed to.

Paragraphs 158 to 162 agreed to.

Paragraph 163 read.

Amendment proposed, to insert “and departments” after “Ministers” and, “but not to act as barriers” after “others”—(Mr Brian White).

Question put, That the Amendment be made.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 1

Mr Brian White

Noes, 7

Mr Kevin Brennan
Annette Brooke
Sir Sydney Chapman
Mr David Heyes
Mr Kelvin Hopkins
Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger
Mr Gordon Prentice

Paragraph agreed to.

Paragraphs 164 to 192 agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Annex agreed to.

Motion made, and question put, That the Report be the fifth Report of the Committee to the House—(The Chairman).

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 7

Mr Kevin Brennan
Annette Brooke
Mr David Heyes
Mr Kelvin Hopkins
Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger
Mr Gordon Prentice
Mr Brian White

Noes, 0

Resolved, That the Report be the Fifth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That the provisions of Standing Order No. 134 (Select committees (reports)) be applied to the Report.

Several Papers were ordered to be appended to the Report.

Ordered, That the Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee be reported to the House.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 13 July at 9.30am

Witnesses

Tuesday 13 January 2004 (HC 212-i)

Professor Colin Blakemore FRS, Chief Executive, Medical Research Council Ev 1

Thursday 5 February 2004 (HC 212-ii)

Professor Sir David King FRS, Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government Ev 13

Thursday 26 February 2004 (HC 212-iii)

Rt Hon Lord Thomson of Monifieth, Chairman, Rt Hon Baroness Dean of Thornton-le-Fylde and Mrs Gay Catto, Secretary, Honours Scrutiny Committee Ev 29

Mr John Lidstone, Commentator on the Honours System and Ms Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, Journalist, The Independent Ev 42

Thursday 11 March 2004 (HC 212-iv)

Professor David Cannadine, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Professor of British History, Institute of Historical Research, University of London, Professor Peter Hennessy, Attlee Professor of Contemporary British History, Queen Mary, University of London and Mr Simon Jenkins, columnist and former editor of *The Times* Ev 54

Thursday 18 March 2004 (HC 212-v)

Rt Hon Kenneth Clarke MP and Kate Hoey MP Ev 72

Thursday 29 April 2004 (HC 212-vi)

Sir Richard Mottram KCB, Permanent Secretary, Department for Work and Pensions and Chairman of the Science and Technology Committee Ev 88

Rt Hon Tony Benn Ev 106

Thursday 20 May 2004 (HC 212-vii)

Rt Hon John Major, CH Ev 112

List of written evidence

Stewart Luck (HON 4)	Ev 1
Michael J Marshall (HON 5)	Ev 1
Mrs Diane M Lennon (HON 8)	Ev 1
T L Johnston (HON 9)	Ev 1
Michael Lister (HON 10)	Ev 2
Mr R Johnston (HON 11)	Ev 4
Republic: Campaign for an Elected Head of State (HON 13)	Ev 5
Alan Mattingly (HON 14)	Ev 9
Professor William D Rubinstein (HON 16)	Ev 10
Mr John Bender (HON 17)	Ev 10
D A Pritchard (HON 18)	Ev 11
Mr Andrew Kirkham (HON 19)	Ev 14
Mr R Neil Marshman (HON 21)	Ev 14
Mr Luke Magee (HON 23)	Ev 14
Richard A McLellan (HON 25)	Ev 15
Mr John Theobald (HON 26)	Ev 15
Mr Jim Hamilton (HON 27)	Ev 19
R H Bradshaw (HON 28)	Ev 19
J R M Branston (HON 29)	Ev 19
John Riley (HON 30)	Ev 20
Andrew C Kelly (HON 32)	Ev 20
A J Pain (HON 33)	Ev 21
Suffolk Fabian Society (HON 34)	Ev 22
C J A Cope (HON 35)	Ev 22
James A Gilman (HON 36)	Ev 22
Revd J Lee Potter (HON 37)	Ev 23
M J Williams (HON 39)	Ev 24
Mr David Giddings (HON 42)	Ev 25
Mr Peter Duffy (HON 43)	Ev 27
Mr Matthew Harvey (HON 44)	Ev 28
John Burt (HON 45)	Ev 28
Mike Parr (HON 46)	Ev 34
R J W d'Apice (HON 47)	Ev 34
Col S J Furness DL (HON 48)	Ev 36
The Physiological Society (HON 49)	Ev 36
C J Simpson (HON 50)	Ev 37
R M McKeag (HON 52)	Ev 37
Professor David Cannadine (HON 53)	Ev 42
Rafal Heydel-Mankoo (HON 54)	Ev 44
Mrs M T Edwards (HON 55)	Ev 57
Graeme J Allan (HON 56)	Ev 58
Burke's Peerage & Gentry (HON 57)	Ev 58

Captain J G Fergusson (HON 58)	Ev 61
Dr B Huston (HON 60)	Ev 62
Dr P J Galloway (HON 61)	Ev 66
Chris Gash (HON 62)	Ev 79
Stephen Michael Szabo (HON 63)	Ev 84
Rt Hon Lord Monro of Langholm AE DL (HON 64)	Ev 85
D W Dawson (HON 65)	Ev 85
Miles Irving (HON 66)	Ev 85
Sir Roger Sims (HON 67)	Ev 86
Mr P H Courtenay (HON 68)	Ev 87
Robin Eve CC (HON 69)	Ev 89
Sir Conrad Swan KCVO (HON 70)	Ev 90
Sir Thomas Macpherson of Biallid CBE MC TD DL (HON 71)	Ev 92
J B Ogilvie OBE TD DL (HON 72)	Ev 92
Rt Hon Lord Hurd of Westwell CH CBE (HON 73)	Ev 93
Mrs H P Bostock (HON 74)	Ev 95
P J Stanbridge (HON 75)	Ev 95
Imperial Society of Knights Bachelor (HON 76)	Ev 100
Mrs J M Riley (HOM 77)	Ev 105
Russell Malloch (HON 78)	Ev 105
Frederick Rapsey (HON 79)	Ev 119
Dr J C Horton (HON 80)	Ev 125
Royal Society (HON 81)	Ev 129
Royal College of Nursing (HON 82)	Ev 132
David W Graham MBE (HON 83)	Ev 134
Mr T Cooper (HON 84)	Ev 135
Orders & Medals Research Society (HON 85)	Ev 136
Tim Lawes (HON 86)	Ev 137
Dr Aneez Esmail (HON 87)	Ev 138
Edward Goodman (HON 88)	Ev 141
Nicholas Jackson (HON 89)	Ev 143
John Barstow (HON 90)	Ev 147
All Party Parliamentary Rugby League Group (HON 91)	Ev 147
Anne McLaren (HON 92)	Ev 149
Rugby Football League (HON 93)	Ev 149
Francis Bennion (HON 96)	Ev 150
Bronwen Manby (HON 97)	Ev 152
R F Dykes (HON 98)	Ev 153
Professor Peter S Harper (HON 100)	Ev 153

List of written evidence included in the Minutes of Evidence

Mr John Lidstone (HON 24; 24(a))

Sir Richard Mottram KCB, Permanent Secretary, Department for Work and Pensions and Chairman of the Science and Technology Committee (HON 99)

Rt Hon Tony Benn (HON 12)

Rt Hon John Major CH (HON 95)

List of unprinted written evidence

Additional papers have been received from the following and have been reported to the House but to save printing costs they have not been printed and copies have been placed in the House of Commons library where they may be inspected by members. Other copies are in the Record Office, House of Lords and are available to the public for inspection. Requests for inspection should be addressed to the Record Office, House of Lords, London SW1. (Tel 020 7219 3074) hours of inspection are from 9:30am to 5:00pm on Mondays to Fridays.

J.O Weston BEM (HON 2)

Dr Alan Bird (HON 3)

Dr S F Johnson (HON 6)

William Gray Junior (HON 7)

G J Brown Esq JP (HON 15)

Mark Starr (HON 20)

Mrs P Edwards (HON 22)

David Holliday (HON 38)

Tom MacLean (HON 40)

John S Rooney (HON 41)

Professor T A Preston (HON 59)

Rita Restorick (HON 94)

Reports from the Public Administration Select Committee since 2001

Session 2003–04

First Report	A Draft Civil Service Bill: Completing the Reform	HC 128–I
Second Report	The Work of the Committee in 2003	HC 229
Third Report	Ministerial Accountability and Parliamentary Questions	HC 355
Fourth Report	Taming the Prerogative: Strengthening Ministerial Accountability to Parliament	HC 422
Fifth Report	A Matter of Honour: Reforming the Honours System	HC 212–I

Session 2002–03

First Special Report	The Public Service Ethos: Government's Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2001–02	HC 61
First Report	Ministerial Accountability and Parliamentary Questions: The Government Response to the Ninth Report from the Committee (Session 2001–02)	HC 136
Second Report	The Work of the Committee in 2002	HC 447
Third Report	Ombudsman Issues	HC 448 (<i>Cm 5890</i>)
Fourth Report	Government By Appointment: Opening up the Patronage State	HC 165–I
Fifth Report	On Target? Government By Measurement	HC 62–I (<i>HC 1264</i>)
Sixth Report	On Target? Government By Measurement: the Government's Response to the Committee's Fifth Report	HC 1264

Session 2001–02

First Report	Public Participation: Issues and Innovations: The Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2000–01	HC 334
Second Report	The Ministerial Code: Improving the Rule Book: The Government Response to the Committee's Third Report of Session 2000–01	HC 439
Third Report	Special Advisers: Boon or Bane: The Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2000–01	HC 463
Fourth Report	Ministerial Accountability and Parliamentary Questions: The Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2000–01	HC 464
Fifth Report	The Second Chamber: Continuing the Reform	HC 494–I (<i>HC 794</i>)
Sixth Report	The Second Chamber: Continuing the Reform: The Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report	HC 794

Seventh Report	The Public Service Ethos	HC 263-I (<i>HC 61</i>)
Eighth Report	"These Unfortunate Events": Lessons of Recent Events at the Former DTLR	HC 303-I (<i>Cm 5756</i>)
Ninth Report	Ministerial Accountability and Parliamentary Questions	HC 1086 (<i>HC 136</i>)

The response to the report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.