

Appendix 1: Scrapping the Monarchy?

How much longer do you think the monarchy will last?

The shocking death of Princess Diana in 1997 brought a great deal of attention to bear on Great Britain's royal family—much of it negative. Many complaints came forward about the Civil List, the sum granted by Parliament to meet the House of Windsor's official expenses—which was "set at £8.9 million a year, but other royal income, including the Queen's travel allowance, raises the cost to the taxpayer to about £50 million a year" (The Telegraph, Sept. 14, 1997).

Also at issue has been the degree of public access to royal palaces. Of course, the events of Sept. 11, 2001, have done much to silence such concerns. But there is still discontent over the level of communication between the royal family and the British people.

Prime Minister Tony Blair has advocated the monarchy paying for itself. But that's a far cry from the reform sought by many in his party, who want a republic. In 1997, the British Telegraph explained that "many of his Cabinet colleagues have previously made controversial comments about the Royal Family, including Ron Davies, the Welsh Secretary, who said Prince Charles was not fit to be king, and John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, who has declared himself to be in favour of abolishing the monarchy."

The same newspaper cited another source as saying that "the logic of New Labour—especially the abolition of hereditary peers—could lead even Blair supporters to call for the scrapping of the monarchy."

The Sunday Times of London, reporting on a survey it conducted with a major British polling firm, said that "the royals must modernise to survive—a majority (58%) do not believe the monarchy will exist in its present form in 30 years' time" (Sept. 14, 1997). Charles himself favors change, though he "warns that 'we must not throw the baby out with the bathwater' by destroying all that is good about the monarchy."

But is the monarchy truly a good thing? In 1994, one of the most respected British magazines in the world, The Economist, editorialized that "the monarchy's time has passed . . . the only powerful argument against abolition is that it is not worth the trouble" (Oct. 22, p. 15).

Criticizing it as "an unelected institution, redolent of authority and selected by accident of birth," the magazine labeled the monarchy "the antithesis of . . . democracy, liberty, reward for achievement rather than inheritance. Surrounded as it is by privilege and patronage . . . it is also a symbol of aristocracy, of feudal honors, of baseless deference." Yet it is certainly not baseless, as the substance of this publication reveals.

The royal family's popularity has risen in the past few years, though not to the level of decades past. Many remain unhappy with the amount of tax money going to support the monarchy. Yet according to a December 2001 poll by The Observer, 75 percent of the British people want the monarchy to continue—with 55 percent believing the successor to the throne should be Prince Charles (www.guardian.co.uk/monarchy/story/0,2763,625864,00.html). In fact, most (59%) believe he should be allowed to marry Camilla Parker Bowles, but they don't want her to become queen.

Perhaps the most interesting results were the answers to the question "How much longer do you think the monarchy will last?" The responses were: "Only until the Queen dies or abdicates 8%; For another 10 years or less after the Queen dies or abdicates 11%; More than 10 but less than 20 years 9%; More than 20 but less than 50 years 15%; More than 50 but less than 100 years 9%; At least 100 years 34%; Don't know 14%." Thus, the majority believe that the monarchy will be gone within 100 years.

The surprising truth is that the monarchy will not only last more than 100 years, but more than 1,000 and even 10,000 years. Indeed, the monarchy that rules over Great Britain, as this publication proves, will endure forever and ever.