

## 54 Politics and public institutions

Look at the definitions below taken from a dictionary of politics. Make sure you understand not only the words listed but the words used in the definitions too.

### A Types of government

**republic:** a state governed by representatives and, usually, a president

**monarchy:** a state ruled by a king or queen



**democracy:** government of, by and for the people

**dictatorship:** system of government run by a dictator

**independence:** freedom from outside control; self-governing

The British Isles



 The United Kingdom  
 The Republic of Ireland

### B People and bodies involved in politics

**Member of Parliament (MP):** a representative of the people in Parliament

**politician:** someone for whom politics is a career

**statesman/woman:** someone who uses an important political position wisely and well

**Prime Minister:** the head of government or leading minister in many countries

**chamber:** hall used by a group of legislators; many countries have two chambers

**cabinet:** a committee of the most important ministers in the government

**President and Vice-President:** the head of state in many modern states

**Mayor:** head of a town or city council

**ambassador:** top diplomat representing his/her country abroad

**embassy:** the building where an ambassador and his/her staff are based

**ministry:** a department of state headed by a minister.

### C Elections

**constituency:** a political area whose inhabitants are represented by one MP

**candidate:** someone who stands in an election

**policy:** the programme of action of a particular party or government

**majority:** the number of votes by which a person wins an election

**referendum:** a direct vote by the population on some important public issue

**by(e)-election:** an election in one constituency in contrast to a General Election

**marginal seat:** a parliamentary seat held by a very small majority of votes

**the opposition:** members of parliament who do not belong to the party in power

**stand/run for Parliament:** to be a candidate in an election

**vote:** to choose in a formal way, e.g. by marking a ballot paper

**elect:** to choose someone or something by voting

You will find words dealing with types of political belief in Unit 67.

## Exercises

**54.2** Look at this text about politics in the UK. Fill in the missing words.

Parliament in the UK consists of two ..... (1): the House of Commons and the House of Lords. In the House of Commons there are 650 ..... (2), each representing one ..... (3). The ruling party in the Commons is the one which gains a ..... (4) of seats. The main figure in that party is called the ..... (5). The Commons is elected for a maximum period of 5 years although the Prime Minister may call a general ..... (6) at any time within that period.

**54.3** Make some more words based on those you studied opposite.

<i>abstract noun</i>	<i>person noun</i>	<i>verb</i>	<i>adjective</i>
revolution	revolutionary	revolutionise	revolutionary
representation	.....	.....	.....
election	.....	.....	.....
dictatorship	.....	.....	.....
presidency	.....	.....	.....

**Activities in written and spoken English** (for both attending and non-attending students):

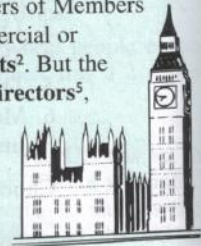
Write an short essay and talk about the political system, the government, the constitution and the electoral system of a country of your choice – using the vocabulary on the opposite page, on the basis of the exercise 54.2 and the reading texts n. 1a and 1b (Unit 1, a.y. 2024/2025).

# 46

## British politics

**A** This text from an incisive commentator on British politics and society, Anthony Sampson, uses many words and expressions which are useful when talking or writing about politics.

Behind the public debates of parliament, the hidden pressures on government influence **legislation**<sup>1</sup> much more than speeches. Growing numbers of Members of Parliament (MPs) are themselves well-paid to represent commercial or special interests, sometimes more assiduously than their own **constituents**<sup>2</sup>. But the most powerful **lobbies**<sup>3</sup>, like the big **corporations**<sup>4</sup> or the **Institute of Directors**<sup>5</sup>, do not bother much about Members: they can go straight to **ministers**<sup>6</sup> and **civil servants**<sup>7</sup>. [...] **Lobbyists**<sup>8</sup> reach their annual climax when the **Chancellor of the Exchequer**<sup>9</sup> is preparing his **annual budget**<sup>10</sup> and receives **petitions**<sup>11</sup> from business interests pressing for **tax concessions**<sup>12</sup>.



- <sup>1</sup> law-making (person = a **legislator**; verb = **legislate**)
- <sup>2</sup> people who elected one MP (as a group = **constituency**)
- <sup>3</sup> interest groups who try to influence MPs (verb = **lobby**)
- <sup>4</sup> large companies (adjective = **corporate**)
- <sup>5</sup> organisation of top business people
- <sup>6</sup> MPs with top responsibilities, e.g. for health, education
- <sup>7</sup> people employed in government departments (the Civil Service)
- <sup>8</sup> people who lobby (see note 3)
- <sup>9</sup> finance minister (in the UK)
- <sup>10</sup> yearly financial plan (of tax rates, etc.)
- <sup>11</sup> formal requests often signed by lots of people
- <sup>12</sup> reductions in taxes (verb = **concede**)

**B** In this text Anthony Sampson looks at the relative strengths of different types of lobbyists.

The interests of **producers**<sup>1</sup> – **centralised**<sup>2</sup>, **close-knit**<sup>3</sup> and **well-funded**<sup>4</sup> – inevitably win over the **consumers**<sup>5</sup>, who are scattered and **fragmented**<sup>6</sup>, and the most powerful pressures of all, like the road-and-car lobby, change the face of the country through backstairs pressures which are concealed from any public debate. Gradually non-commercial lobbies have also become much better organised, like **Friends of the Earth**<sup>7</sup> or the **Child Poverty Action Group**<sup>8</sup>, some

with hundreds of thousands of **paid-up members**<sup>9</sup>. Others relentlessly lobby Members of Parliament with mass-produced letters and **deputations**<sup>10</sup> to intimidate and encircle them. [...] They have done much to **counter**<sup>11</sup> big-business pressures with the help of effective publicity; but they cannot take account of **grievances**<sup>12</sup> of the individual, who can only **appeal to**<sup>13</sup> his own Member of Parliament.

- <sup>1</sup> manufacturers; a person or business that makes something (note words from same root – **product**, **productive**, **mass-produced**, etc.)
- <sup>2</sup> concentrated in one central organisation (noun = **centralisation**)
- <sup>3</sup> with close ties to each other
- <sup>4</sup> with plenty of financial support
- <sup>5</sup> people who use/buy products
- <sup>6</sup> separate; not centralised
- <sup>7</sup> large environmental organisation
- <sup>8</sup> large organisation helping children
- <sup>9</sup> people who have paid their membership fees, i.e. committed members
- <sup>10</sup> people sent to speak for a group
- <sup>11</sup> oppose
- <sup>12</sup> complaints about unfair treatment
- <sup>13</sup> request support from

## Exercises

### 46.1 Are these statements about the texts true or false?

- 1 Parliamentary debates are the main influence on legislation.
- 2 Some MPs do more for big business than for their constituents.
- 3 The most powerful business organisations approach ministers directly.
- 4 Business is influential partly because it is well-organised and has money.
- 5 The public is well-informed about all the different lobbies.
- 6 Non-commercial organisations are getting better at influencing MPs.
- 7 The individual can do nothing if he or she has a grievance.

### 46.2 Read the texts opposite and find three examples of:

- 1 nouns denoting people (Text A)
- 2 adjectives that can be used to describe social organisations (Text B)
- 3 verbs that can have a strong political association (Text B)

### 46.3 Find words from the texts formed from the same roots as the words in the box.

1 commerce	3 constituency	5 consumption	7 legislate
2 mass-produced	4 petitioner	6 pressurise	8 representative

### 46.4 Now match the words in the box in 46.3 to their meanings below.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 person standing for the interests of a group | 5 area represented by one MP                  |
| 2 person signing a formal request              | 6 to try to force someone to do something     |
| 3 made in large quantities                     | 7 amount purchased, used or eaten             |
| 4 to make laws                                 | 8 all the activities associated with business |