

IN THIS ISSUE

The Constitution Unit
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– the inability of Westminster MPs to vote on Scottish issues – was highlighted by the controversial closure of one of Lanarkshire's three Accident & Emergency

There were tactical differences between pragmatists and fundamentalists in the DUP, with the former on best political behaviour at the British-Irish Interparliamentary Body. But the party leader, Rev Ian Paisley, delved deep into popular-Protestant tradition, invoking

all monitored bodies' requests answered within the statutory 20-day limit (or within permitted extensions). Of those requests resolved, 68 per cent were granted in full; 10 per cent were withheld in part; 14 per cent were withheld in full; and the remaining 8 per cent had not yet received a substantive response.

The ICO outlined the extent of the delays in its annual report published in July. Of the 2713 complaints received in 2005-6, 1666 were closed and 1290 were being processed. Around 70 per cent of cases were between 0 and 60 days old; however, 14 per cent had been with the ICO for longer than 181 days.

The Future of Party Funding

Two inquiries into the future of party funding are currently under way. The Prime Minister has asked former civil servant Sir Hayden Phillips to 'examine the case for state funding of political parties including whether it should be enhanced in return for a cap on the size of donations; and to consider the transparency of political parties' funding'.

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INTERNATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL FOCUS 2: CATALONIA

On 18 June 2006, Catalonia voted for greater autonomy from Madrid in a referendum notable for its low turnout. Whilst 73.9 per cent of voters backed the plans supported by Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, the turnout was only 49.4 per cent, sparking questions about the devotion of the Catalan people to greater independence.

The result gives the Catalan government greater power over a wide range of policy areas – including tax revenues, judicial appointments and airports, ports and

Zapatero's minority government – dependent on the support of two Catalanian a 'new dawn' for Catalonia whilst simultaneously trying to reassure others that it was opposed by the conservative Popular Party who argued it would lead to the break up of Spain, and from the left by groups who argued it did not go far enough.

House of Lords Research

Two further conference papers have been presented from this project since the last . Meg Russell and Maria Sciara presented a paper entitled 'Legitimacy and Bicameral Strength: A Case Study of the House of Lords' to a meeting of the Political Studies Association specialist group on in June. This paper, which draws on public and elite opinion polls, and media analysis, suggests that the House of Lords is coming to be seen as increasingly legitimate despite its unelected basis. It is available to download from the project website at www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/research/parliament/house-of-lords.html. Meg and Maria also presented a paper entitled 'Parliamentarians without Party: The "Crossbenchers" in the House of Lords' to the Seventh Workshop of Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Scholars at Wroxton College in July. This paper (like the June paper) is now due to be revised

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CONSTITUTION UNIT PUBLICATIONS

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(Geneva: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2006)

Brazier, Alex and Vidya Ram,

(London: The Hansard Society, 2006)

Campaign for an English Parliament,

(Campaign for an English Parliament 2006)

Edwards, Giles,