

“constitutional reform
since 1997 has not
gone far enough”
discuss

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“ Constitutional reform since 1997 has not gone far enough" discuss In 1997 the Labour government came to power, with Tony Blair as Prime Minister (later Gordon Brown 2007 - 2010). During their time in office the Labour party made a series of constitutional reforms, this was due to the fact that the constitution had areas that needed modifying; this was achieved by increasing democracy, decentralisation and individual rights. However there are still parts of the constitution that could be improved. Labour’s first major reform to the UK constitution was the introduction of the Human Rights Act (1998). This act has safeguarded rights such as the right to life and the right to a fair trial. Prior to this act, our human rights were just included in common law, which can be easily changed. And so, this constitutional reform was a major step forward. However, this reform was incomplete as a new bill of rights and duties was proposed, but no legislation was put forward by the Government. And so, it can be seen that although there was a change to the UK constitution, the lack of an entrenched bill of human rights shows that the reform did not go far enough. In 1999 Labour reformed the House of Lords; Labour removed 600 hereditary peers and reduced it to only 92 hereditary Lords in the House of Lords. However, the labor government did propose a system of “ elected peers", where the public could choose peers to sit in the House of Lords. This proposal was never fully implemented into the UK constitution. Until this proposal is full entrenched it is argued that the Lords are not democratically legitimate as all policy making institutions must have legitimacy. Therefore, there is much that can be done towards constitutional reform. Another one of Labour’s reforms to the UK was the devolution act. In Labour’s manifesto they said that they would address the issues of

devolution and making the country more democratic. When Labour got into office they did address this issue by hold two referendums on Scottish devolution and Welsh devolution. 74. 3% of Scottish voters voted yes for a Scottish a parliament, 50. 3% of Welsh voters voted for a Welsh assembly. Labors reform dose show aspects of reform to the UK constitution by decentralizing power from Westminster. However it can be argued that the reform did not go far enough, the devolved assemblies, are given different powers in different regions as chosen by parliament. Also, there is a level of subsidiary in the assemblies, as Parliament is still ultimately sovereign, it can repeal the devolution acts; Scotland Act 1998, Wales Act 1998. There is also concern with the power that devolved assemblies have over passing bills which do not affect their constituents. Therefore, it is clear that much more can be done for constitutional reform. In 2000 Labour reformed the UK constitution again by introducing the Freedom of Information Act, it gave citizens greater power to view information that they wished to view, it also allowed Parliament and the media to achieve greater access to official papers and reports. The Freedom of Information Act also gave government a more democratic political system (like with devolution). However it can be argued that the constitutional reform did not go far enough, parliament still have the right to object requests to view documents that people wish to view. In conclusion it can be argued that constitutional reform since 1997 has not gone far enough. Much more can be done to renew the UK's constitutions. For example the matter of the constitution being un-codified could be addressed, and the reaming proposal of “ elected Lords”. Society is

forever changing; therefore more needs to be addressed and modernized with the UK constitution.