

Understanding

"The British Monarch"

The existence or absence of a monarch does in itself make a fundamental distinction in Constitution. In a Cabinet system the Cabinet governs. The functions of the head of State be he King are auxiliary. But the advantage of Constitutional monarchy is that the head of the State is free of Party ties. The monarch is entitled to put his own views before the Government and to ask the Government to weigh them thoroughly. But if ministers insist he must give way. He is not entitled to identify himself with a particular set of measures or a particular set of Party politicians for if he does he himself becomes a politician, entitled to be criticized & attacked like other politicians. So basically he acts on the advice of a minister supported by a majority in the House of Commons. So the King or Queen of England is a Constitutional Monarch who reigns but does not rule. So when the highest State Power is exercised by one person by a King or Queen then the system is known as Monarchy. In Monarchy the King usually gets power hereditarily. The main power of a monarch is to appoint the Prime Minister & on the advice of P.M. the other ministers are appointed.

The powers are never exercised by the Monarch himself, they are exercised in the King's name by Ministers who derive their authority from Parliament and are responsible to Parliament for the use they make of these powers. The three main powers of the King are :-

1) Executive power :- It is numerous that only some of the most important can be mentioned here. The Crown is the Supreme executive head & it must as such see that all national laws are duly observed and enforced. It directs the work of administrative branch & national service, collects & expends, according to law, national service, revenues, appoints all higher executive & administrative officers, judges, bishops & the officers of army, navy, airforce etc. He can suspend the officers except judges & other employees of government from service. The Crown conducts the foreign relations of Britain with other countries, sends & receives ambassadors or other diplomatic agents & all foreign negotiations are carried on in the name of the Crown. The declaration of war & making of peace are prerogative of the Crown. The Crown is also the treaty making authority and all international agreements are made in its name. Both in 1914 and 1939 the Ministers made the decision and in the name of the Crown they led the country to war. The Parliament itself has no authority to declare war it belongs exclusively to Crown.

2) Legislative power :- The crown is an integral part of the national legislature and its assent is essential to the enactment of laws. The crown accordingly summons, prorogues and dissolves Parliament. When a new parliament meets it is usually greeted by the Monarch in a speech from the throne, which is usually delivered by the King or Queen in person from the throne in the House of Lords with the Commons present.

3) Judicial power :- All issues which come before the judicial committee of the Privy Council are decided by the Crown. Finally the Crown exercises the prerogative of mercy & may grant pardon to persons convicted of criminal offences.

According to the early theory of the Constitution the ministers were the Counsellors of the King. It was for them to advise & for him to decide but now the parts are almost reversed. The King is consulted but the ministers decide.

In many cases the Monarch may personally know little what they decide or even if he knows he may like for them, although the Crown powers are exercised in his name. His Majesty's servants have become His Majesty's ministers.