



Axe The Monarchy

It is time we got shot of the British Monarchy, for it represents the feudal society of medieval England and is intolerable in a modern democracy. It represents the pinnacle of the class system in Britain, promoting social division and snobbery, and separating it from hard-working people. Britain will never become totally democratic when people are given opportunities, not according to their ability, but according to their birth. As long as the monarchy survives, so will the class system in Britain.

It is surely unacceptable that the British taxpayer should be paying £75,000,000 a year to support one of the richest families in Britain (wealth accumulated of course from the people during previous centuries). That would pay the University tuition fees of 75,000 of the poorest students, fund 25 new secondary schools, or pay for the running of an entire hospital. Last year, additional expenses for a £200,000 wardrobe for Buckingham Palace were made to the tax payer. It is all kept hush, hush, but the Royal Family is reported to be worth £650 million.

It may generate income from tourism, but this would increase to unprecedented levels if we were to abolish the monarchy and open up all the palaces as museums, hotels or restaurants.

When people are forced to sleep on the streets, we cannot justify spending £75,000,000 on a relic that serves no purpose. There is no credible evidence whatsoever to support the ludicrous claim those tourists came here to catch a glimpse of Liz Windsor peaking out of her curtains. To misquote Churchill: "Never in the field of human existence has so much been taken from so many, by so few".

The royals have been collecting other people's wealth for generations. In the British Isles the queen owns the crown estate - almost 120,000 hectares of seized agricultural land, dating from 1066 at an estimated value of £7,300,000,000 in 2010. This wealth must be returned to the citizens of the country.

As if this wasn't enough, there's another often overlooked cost when discussing the 'Royal' Family: the cost of their bank holidays. The bank holiday for the last Royal Wedding is estimated to have cost the UK economy somewhere between £3 and 5 billion, with the same for the Queen's Jubilee. Against a backdrop of austerity measures, slashing up to £10 billion out of the economy so we can all watch a wedding and a trumped up picnic is nothing short of feckless. It seems absurd that much of Britain is forced to take a day off to watch two people, who are no more extraordinary than anyone else, get married. This is a much larger burden on smaller businesses over large corporations, who can't afford another day of closure and the three-day working weeks that came as a result.

Monarchs no longer have divine right to rule. For centuries the main justification of royal authority was a religious one. Catholic rulers had their legitimacy supported by the Papacy, Protestants rulers often headed their own state churches; in both the monarch's rightful authority was preached in church every Sunday, while the ruler in turn protected a single national church. Currently, the Monarch is termed 'the defender of the Protestant faith'. She or he is required to be a member of the Church of England and is not allowed to marry a Catholic. Today societies are increasingly multi-faith; indeed, fewer than 5% of adults in the United Kingdom are practising Anglicans, and many people have no religion at all; and hardly anyone believes the monarch has a spiritual right to exercise authority. Indeed, those whose religion differs from that of the monarch (often ethnic minorities) may be actively alienated by the way in which a particular faith seems to be privileged.

The alternative to the monarch is obvious. Many states around the world have Presidential systems like the Republic of Ireland. Unless a candidate runs unopposed, the President is directly elected by the people, holds office for seven years, and can be elected for a maximum of two terms. The presidency is largely a ceremonial office, but the President does exercise certain limited powers with absolute discretion. The last 3 Presidents – Mary Robinson, Mary McAleese and Michael D. Higgins – have been highly respected.

Other examples include the United States where the President fulfils both the role of the Head of State and the Head of Government, combining the two roles. In Italy or Germany there is both a head of state (usually president) and a head of government (Prime Minister or Chancellor), and the head of state is mostly a ceremonial role. Finally, there may be both a head of state and head of government where both are powerful as in France. Therefore the head of state can still be in whatever role the state requires. Most importantly in all these cases the head of state is elected rather than simply gaining the position on account of birth.

The Monarchy is backward and prejudiced. The succession to the monarchy puts sons before daughters which is primitive and backward in modern times of gender equality. Sons inherit before daughters, even if the daughter is older. The Act of Settlement restricts anyone from succession who is not a member of the Church of England. This restricts the royal family from marrying a Catholic. The most recent victim to this sinister law was Autumn Kelly, who in 2002 renounced her Catholic faith so that she could marry Elizabeth Windsor's eldest grandson. No other establishment would be able to discriminate along these lines in a lawful manner. The outdated laws reflect how out of touch British Monarchy is.

On top of all that we have had the most appalling behaviour from many of the royals. Prince Phillip is a disgrace to the nation with his many racist and inappropriate gaffs. Then there is Prince Andrew who, apart from allegations about underage sex, spends a great deal of time outside the UK despite having been forced to step down in 2011 from his role as Britain's roving trade ambassador. In 2014, however, he went on roving of his own accord. He visited 15 countries alone on so-called 'working visits'. Working at what? His golf swing? We should also note that the man without income has recently managed to obtain a mortgage to acquire a £13m ski chalet in Switzerland. How? Duchess Of York (Sarah Ferguson) in her 'Cash for access scandal' in 2010 was filmed by *News of the World* offering access to Prince Andrew for £500,000. Prince Charles rants on about our carbon footprint and then jumps into a helicopter to go a few miles. Harry dresses up in a Nazi uniform. I rest my case. ANDY BARR