

Professor Robert Hazell



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The Constitution Unit in the School of Public Policy at University College London has made an important contribution to the delivery of the Government's constitutional reform programme. It is headed by Professor Robert Hazell, Professor of Government and the Constitution at University College, London.

Professor Hazell began his career as a lawyer but left the legal profession to pursue his interest in law reform and public policy. Professor Hazell worked at the Home Office from 1975–89, and left Whitehall to become Director of the Nuffield Foundation before joining UCL in 1995.

Professor Hazell founded the Constitution Unit in 1995, foreseeing the situation of a Labour Government undertaking constitutional reforms without really learning from its own history. Professor Hazell cites two examples of the Labour Government's previous attempts at reform – the failure to deliver devolution in Scotland and Wales in the 1970s, and the abortive attempt at reform of the House of Lords in 1968. There were important lessons to be learnt from both these episodes, and a need for any future reforms to be planned in a much more systematic way, learning lessons from overseas as well as from experts in the UK.

ROLE OF THE CONSTITUTION UNIT

The unit is an independent and non-partisan body which conducts programmes of research, training, consultancy and advice, and publishes a quarterly newsletter entitled *Monitor*. Its main functions are to analyse current


proposals for constitutional reform; explore the connections between them; identify the practical steps involved in putting the reforms in place; assess their immediate and longer term impact; and last but certainly not least, to explain their significance to government and the public.

Members of the unit are regularly involved in training programmes with the Civil Service and government departments. They have produced a steady stream of reports, briefings and articles with over 60 publications so far. The unit also produces books, the most recent being a comparative study of second chambers abroad entitled *Reforming the House of Lords: Lessons from Overseas* which was published by OUP in January. Last year, OUP published *Constitutional Futures: A History of the next Ten Years*, edited and largely authored by Professor Hazell, and looking at the totality of the constitutional reform programme. The unit's next book is *The State and the Nations: the First Year of Devolution in the UK*, which will be launched when Professor Hazell gives the unit's first 'State of the Union' lecture in December.

Three major projects of interest to lawyers are being undertaken by the unit. The first is a comparative study of Supreme and Constitutional Courts, to inform the debate about the growing pressures on the law lords and the calls for a supreme court which is separate

from the House of Lords. Related to this is a comparative study of the research and support needs of the higher courts, looking at the relative merits of judicial clerks, amicus curiae and third party intervenors. This study will include an evaluation of the new judicial assistants in the Court of Appeal. The third project is a study of how the law and devolution disputes help to shape the devolution settlement in its first five years.

Talking about his book *Constitutional Futures*, Professor Hazell described it as 'a book looking at the totality of constitutional reform and drawing strong connections between individual items; it is our attempt to look 10 years ahead and to forecast the cumulative impact of these reforms.'

When asked about the unit's future role, Professor Hazell said: 'I hope that the unit will continue to influence public policy, in the same way that it helped to shape the new Labour Government's constitutional reform programme, both in terms of individual reforms and the way the government set about and implemented them.' 

Masooma Jaffer

Research Officer in Financial Law, IALS

CURRICULUM VITAE

Robert Hazell was educated as a scholar at Eton College and Wadham College, Oxford (MA Hons). He was called to the Bar at the Middle Temple in 1973 after which he practised as a barrister between 1973–1975. In 1975 he joined the Home Office and worked there until 1989. He served as Director of the Nuffield Foundation from 1989–95 and joined University College London in 1995. Robert Hazell is a trustee of the Citizenship Foundation and a Council member of the Hansard Society and JUSTICE. He has served twice as Special Adviser to the Public Administration Select Committee, and is Vice-Chairman of the Hansard Society Commission on the Scrutiny Role of Parliament. He is the author of *Conspiracy and Civil Liberties* (LSE, 1974), *The Bar on Trial* (Quartet, 1978) and *Constitutional Futures: A History of the next Ten Years* (ed; OUP, 1999) and has written articles in various legal and government journals.