

# The Civil Service and Quangos

Professor Kate Jenkins



# What the Civil Service Looks Like

<b>Politicians (Cabinet and Ministers)</b>	
Cabinet	22-24
Junior Ministers	95
Special Advisors	100 (approx.)
<b>Officials</b>	
Permanent Secretaries (Head of Depts and Ministries)	40
Senior Civil Servants (Policy and Management)	50,000
Executive and Administrative	470,000
<b>Organisations</b>	
<i>Civil Service:</i> Departments and Ministries Executive Agencies	
<i>Public Service:</i> Public Corporations Non-Departmental Bodies	





# What Does it Spend?

<b>Four Major Spending Areas:</b> Pensions Health Welfare Education	£478 Billion
<b>Other Spending Areas:</b> e.g. Transport Law and Order Agriculture Business Defence	£239 Billion
<b>Total Spending:</b>	£717 Billion

# The Rest of the Public Sector

Quangos, NDPBs, Statutory Bodies, Public Corporations

A range of names and activities

Normally set up by statute

To do things for Government that Government does not want to do directly because it:

- is too specialised
- is too contentious
- wants to give an independent view

# What Are They?

**Public Corporations** BBC (licence fee a form of hypothecated tax)

**Statutory Body** The Arts Council (government controlled budget handles the public debate)

**Independent Regulator** OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education)

**Service Provider** NHS

- constant change of structure
- creaking structure
- constant criticism
- ministers refuse to separate from government

# Things Change: The Case of the Post Office

<b>1665</b>	First postal service
<b>1780s</b>	Third largest government department
<b>1810-1970</b>	The Post Master General in the Cabinet; GPO responsible for postal service; post offices and development of telephones
<b>1970</b>	Post Office made a public corporation
<b>1985</b>	Telecoms Division privatised Post Office reorganised into three separate businesses, staff of 300,000
<b>2013</b>	Largest business: Royal Mail 60% privatised Post Offices remain public corporation



# How the Civil Service Developed: Evolution by Reports

<b>18<sup>th</sup> Century</b>	Small government, growing official responsibility Separation of 'ministerial' and 'official' functions
<b>19<sup>th</sup> Century</b>	Growing concern about competence of civil servants, contrast with Indian civil service
<b>1854</b>	Report by Trevelyan and Northcote: 'the civil service is for the unambitious, the indolent and incapable'  Recommended appointments on merit and competitive examinations Unpopular, took decades to implement
<b>1919</b>	Post war reorganisation, generalists to work with Ministers, separate classes for different levels, pay arrangements, pensions – still in place in 1970s



**Samuel Pepys**



**George Downing**

# The 1960s and the Fulton Report

<b>Found:</b>	Lack of training, poor management, not up to date
<b>Recommended:</b>	Re-grading, training, more management skills, wider experience, more flexible systems
<b>Need for:</b>	'keeping in touch with the modern world'
<b>Long Time to Implement:</b>	concentration on over 60 detailed recommendations, no overall view of what was needed

# The 1980s and Next Steps

## *Improving Management in Government: The Next Steps*

Informal, short report by the PM's Efficiency Unit

### **Found:**

Lack of accountable management, lack of precision about results, need to focus on outputs, handicap of uniform system

### **Recommended:**

reorganisation into executive agencies with clear tasks and budgets

'The civil service must own the changes as they evolve, it must not feel that ill considered change is being thrust upon it'

Implementation arrangements in the report implemented within 5 years

75% of civil service in agencies

# Last 20 Years: Constant Change

## Changes to Services:

- Search for different structures: cutting costs
- Contracting out: reduced costs, better services but contractual problems
- Continued search for privatisations
- Lack of experience with private sector contracting
- Impact of technology on systems and staffing

## Changes to civil service employment:

- Introduction of more flexible and short-term contracts
- Growth of numbers of special advisers
- Implications for principles of civil service employment
- More senior officials from outside the Civil Service

# The Constitutional Position: What is a Civil Servant?

Civil servants are:

permanent, do not change with governments  
politically impartial, no loyalty to any political party  
are not corrupt

Their role is:

to maintain the Queen's Government  
to act as servants of the Crown  
to work for the Government of the day  
to protect the probity of Government

Clash comes when use of power can be too tempting: classic case of Pergau Dam

Critical role of the Cabinet Secretary to deal with situations when question of propriety arise



**Robert Armstrong**

# How Does All This Work in Practice?

## Three examples from experience:

### 1. *What generalists can miss:*

- the case of mass redundancies and contract law

### 2. *How parliament can work round inconvenient rules*

- the case of maternity pay

### 3. *How a government can make a major change to the public sector without legislation*

- the case of executive agencies



# Civil Service Legislation

- Arguments about legislation to protect the civil service from political pressure for decades
- Many attempts at draft bills
- 2010 Constitutional Reform and Governance Act put Civil Service values on a statutory footing:
  - integrity
  - honesty
  - objectivity
  - impartiality
- Still concerns:
  - agency accountability
  - separation between policy makers and management
  - the role of special advisers
  - the quality of decision making

# Is There a New World?

- New technology can transform much of transactional work
- Cost should fall rapidly
- Data can improve decision taking

Does the principle of permanence reduce flexibility?

Is impartiality still possible?

Do we fuss too much about probity?

Should there be another rethink of the Civil Service?