

DT011 - Prince Charles's role

Whether, as Mr Montgomery-Massingberd's article (24 September 1990) suggests, Her Majesty should relinquish some or all of her powers to Prince Charles depends on a true understanding of the nature of our monarchy under present conditions. This understanding is difficult to acquire, since the public has been left in the dark about the most important function the Queen has. Executed entirely out of the public eye, it is to *advise and warn* those responsible for the running of affairs. Throughout her lengthy reign the Queen has granted weekly audiences to the Prime Minister of the day, hearing and commenting on all that happens in government. As Head of the Commonwealth, she has frequently conversed with the leaders of those many nations that are heirs to the noble traditions of the British Empire. As Head of State, she has spoken on many occasions with the leaders of almost all other countries. The Queen has thus amassed a store of knowledge and wisdom concerning statecraft which is unequalled in any other country. We should value that, and preserve its availability for as long as possible. To suggest, without it being proved necessary on health grounds, that Her Majesty should now retire and devote herself to 'the quest for a home-bred Derby winner' is both foolish and insulting. The same applies to the article's references to Prince Charles kicking his heels in the royal ante-room and 'the tensions and frustrations of his hopelessly ill-defined role'. His role is not ill-defined. It is patiently to continue preparing himself for the exercise of statecraft, and meanwhile to carry out his numerous important functions as Prince of Wales and administrator of the Duchy of Cornwall. We can be sure this is the view the Prince himself takes. Sentiment to the contrary is simply a canard whipped up by the media.