

Blair's right to act as Prime Minister when retiring

Introductory Note by Francis Bennion

The following letter was published in *The Times* of 8 June 2007 with the omission of the final telling paragraph (shown below in square brackets). This omission is typical of today's dumbed-down version of what used to be known as The Thunderer. How different from the days when my first letter appeared in the paper nearly sixty years ago, without any excisions. See that letter on my website at www.francisebennion.com/1949/001.htm if you would like to see how detailed and serious it was allowed to be, even though written by a mere student. And in those days just after the war there was a severe paper shortage!

Later For a later letter on the same topic see www.francisebennion.com/2007/011.htm.

Later still For a response by FB to a letter criticising the one set out below see www.francisebennion.com/2007/016.htm.

Lame-duck Blair

Sir, You report that at the G8 summit in Heiligendamm Mr Blair yesterday had a meeting with the US President. He is also discussing with leading figures the future of the proposed European Union Constitution and other vital matters.

There has been wide criticism of the way Mr Blair has insisted on acting as a lame-duck Prime Minister for the past nine months, and has been allowed to get away with it. Having been a constitutional expert for more than half a century, I would argue that his behaviour is in breach of the constitution.

Since Mr Blair announced his departure from office on June 27, he has ceased to have any vestige of real power. In substance therefore (as opposed to mere form) he is surely no longer entitled to participate as our leader in negotiations with other countries - especially on matters closely involving the highest interests of the United Kingdom. I believe the courts would so rule if a legal challenge were instituted, since the conduct of the nation's affairs is severely handicapped by his behaviour.

[In ignorance, Mr Blair last year procured the removal of the vital constitutional powers of the Lord Chancellor. Can anyone imagine that the late Lord Hailsham of St Marylebone, when he held that office, would have sat idly by in Cabinet while a Prime Minister thus played ducks and drakes with our constitution?]

Francis Bennion, Former Parliamentary Counsel; Budleigh Salterton, Devon.