

How can Parliament scrutinise the Executive?



Question time

- Standing orders provide Mon, Tues and Thurs from 2.35-3.30 are set aside for question time
- Ministers (on a rota determined by Govt) may be questioned
- Members must give 3 days notice of Q's
- Answers can be oral or written

Prime Minister's Question Time

- Wednesdays; 30 minute slot
- Issues raised are usually general Govt policy; otherwise they are referred to Sec of State for that area
- It questions the PM on his overall knowledge of Govt policy
- Strength of Q Time lies in lack of notice given to PM

PM Question Time Cont

- Leader of Opposition does not have to table Q's
- He is entitled to ask 6 Q's of PM
- It is an opportunity to most critically test a PM

Role of the Speaker

- Rules on questions have been developed over time by the Speaker
- Q's bringing the Sovereign directly to Parl. Or Q's reflecting on the Sovereign are not allowed
- Anything relating to PM advice to Crown, Honours, Royal Prerogative not allowed
- Plus defence, security, and many others

Emergency Debates

- ANY MP can apply to Speaker to raise an urgent matter
- Must be of urgent or national importance
- If granted, matter raised immediately after question time
- Matter briefly introduced at that time, then
- 3 hour debate set aside for following day

Daily Adjournment Debates

- At close of the parliamentary day, Standing Orders provide for a backbencher to initiate a debate on a matter of their choosing.
- A ballot is held in Speaker's office for opportunity
- A member may speak for 15 mins on their chosen subject

Early Day Motions (EDM)

- A written tabled motion requesting a debate at an "early day"
- Any Member can table such a motion
- Can be signed by one Member or several
- Others can add signatures to develop support
- Once tabled it remains current for duration of Parl.
- Success rate low but one in 1979 by Thatcher led to downfall of the, then, Govt

Select Committees

- Take several forms:
 - The running of the House
 - Procedures of House
 - Investigative and reporting
- e.g. the expenses of MPs
- Wide powers to examine papers, persons and records

Order, order!

- End of debate
