

Introduction

During two days of the May 10th and 11th of 2007 at the European Studies Centre of the St. Antony's College (University of Oxford) it was organised a workshop about Parliament history as a part of the Basque Visiting Fellow Programme. The workshop was inaugurated by the Vice-minister of the Universities and scientific policy of the Basque Government Dr Ibone Amezaga and by Professor Knick Harley (European Studies Centre).

How have Parliaments been designed and evolved over the last two centuries in European and the Americas? Specifically, to what extent have various kinds of parliaments been able to accommodate the birth and rise of complex unions and composite states and how did have they reflected the politics and power relations of their time?

The aim of the workshop was twofold. First to seek to address these questions through both horizontal comparative analysis of national parliaments (including the British, French, Italian and Spanish cases) as well as vertical comparative analysis "below and above", eg substate and the supranational Parliaments. Special emphasis will be given to the Basque and Scottish case.

The second aim of this workshop is to bring together scholars representing the major research institutions and projects devoted to the study of the history of Parliaments in order to assess alternative research methods and agenda. It will explore in particular biographical and prosopographical approaches to analysing membership in Parliaments.

I would like to thank the collaboration of the director of the European Studies Centre Dr. Kalypso Nicolaidis, the participants in the event and I want to mention for their invaluable contribution during the debates session the leading members of the International Commission for the History of Representative and Parliamentary Institution, Dr. John Rogister, (former President), Valerie Cromwell (Vice President) and Dr. Henry J. Cohn (Director of the Publications) the professor of Oxford Brooks University Jeremy MacClancy, Dr. Katja S. Ziegler Deputy Director of the Institute of European and Comparative Law and the head of Studies of the Basque Parliament Andoni Iturbe.

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Editor