3RD Edition

UK Government & Politics

Extension activities for students

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Chapter 1

Democracy and participation

Task 1.1

Go to the House of Commons Research Paper (05/33) at www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2005/RP05-033.pdf and look for evidence of political participation in the 2005 UK general election. You might find the following of particular value:

➢ Levels of turnout (p. 59)
➢ Constituencies with the highest and lowest turnouts (p. 60)
➢ Turnout by social characteristics (p. 63)
➢ Postal and proxy voting (p. 65)
➢ Candidates: candidates by party and sex (p. 71)
➢ Voting by social characteristics (p. 73)
➢ Characteristics of MPs elected (p. 82)

1   What conclusions can you draw from this research paper about the levels of participation at the 2005 general election?
2   What trends were apparent?
3   What other evidence would you need to get a broader view of political participation generally in 2005?
4   See if you can find the equivalent data for the 2010 general election. Are there any significant differences?

Task 1.2

In May 2010 there was a general election in the UK. You can find the manifestos for each party at:

www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/ge10/man10.htm

The general election produced a 'hung parliament' and as a result the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties agreed to govern as a coalition. You can find the details of the coalition agreement by going to:

www.libdems.org

Type 'coalition agreements' into the search box in the top right-hand corner and click on the result called 'Conservative Liberal Democrat coalition agreements/Our Campaigns Detail'.

1   What proposals did each of the major parties make in their manifestos to enhance democracy and improve participation in the UK?
2   Make a list of the proposals to enhance democracy and improve participation in the UK agreed between the two parties.
3   What progress has been made with each of these proposals?

Chapter 2

Elections and voting

Task 2.1

Using the resources you have available, including the internet:

➢ research the electoral systems listed in the table below

➢ find the answers to questions 1–8

➢ record your answers in the table, adapting it if necessary

FPTP has already been done for you.

	Electoral system						
Question	**FPTP**	**AV**	**SV**	**List**	**STV**	**AMS**	**AV+**
1 How many votes does each elector have? One, two or more?	1						
2 How do electors vote? With a 'x' or 1,2,3 in order of preference?	x						
3 Are constituencies local, regional or national?	Local						
4 How many representatives are elected from each constituency? Single or multiple?	1						
5 Who do electors vote for? An individual or a party?	An individual						
6 How do you win? By getting a simple majority? By getting an agreed proportion (quota) of the votes? By getting 50% of the votes? Or are seats allocated in some other way?	Most votes						
7 Is there a regional 'top-up' to increase proportionality?	No						
8 Give an example of this electoral system.	House of Commons						

Task 2.2

Try the same exercise, but this time for specific elections. The European Parliament elections have been done for you.

	Election					
Question	**European Parliament**	**House of Commons**	**Scottish Parliament**	**Welsh Assembly**	**Northern Ireland Executive**	**London mayor**
1 What electoral system is used?	Regional list					
2 How many votes does each elector have? One, two or more?	1					
3 How do electors vote? With a 'x' or 1,2,3 in order of preference?	x					
4 Are constituencies local, regional or national?	Regional					
5 How many representatives are elected from each constituency? Single or multiple?	Multiple					
6 Who do electors vote for? An individual or a party?	Party or an independent					
7 How do you win? By getting a simple majority? By getting an agreed proportion (quota) of the votes? By getting 50% of the votes? Or are seats allocated in some other way?	Seats allocated broadly in proportion to votes cast					
8 Is there a regional 'top-up' to increase proportionality?	No					

Task 2.3

Go to the coalition's programme for government at:

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfg_coalition.pdf

1   Draw a table like the one below and make a list of what reforms to the electoral system the coalition government promised to consider in May 2010.
2   Research and record any progress that has been made. The BBC website is a good place to start.

Promise on electoral reform	Progress to date

Task 2.4

Look at the data from the May 2010 general election on the ipsos-Mori website:

http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchspecialisms/socialresearch/specareas/politics/generalelection2010.aspx

and look specifically at:

www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/poll.aspx?oItemId=2613&view=wide)

1   Identify the key social factors that seem to be correlated with voting behaviour at that election.
2   Summarise what you have found, supporting your answer with evidence.

Chapter 3

Political parties: structure

Task 3.1

Download the annual income and expenditure accounts for the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties from the Electoral Commission website:

Conservative party (p. 9)

www.electoralcommission.org.uk/party-finance/database-of-registers/statements-of-accounts/soa/pdfs/soa_23-07-09_10-36-34.pdf

Labour party (p. 8)

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/party-finance/database-of-registers/statements-of-accounts/soa/pdfs/soa_22-07-09_10-01-08.pdf

Liberal Democrat party (p. 9)

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/party-finance/database-of-registers/statements-of-accounts/soa/pdfs/soa_23-07-09_13-52-05.pdf

1 Use tables like the ones below and record, in order of importance, the main sources of each party's income for 2007 and 2008.
2 Work out and record the percentage of the total income derived from each source.
3 Record, in order of importance, the main areas of each party's expenditure for 2007 and 2008.
4 Work out and record the percentage of the total expenditure on each area.
5 What conclusions can you draw from this analysis?

Income

Source	Income	% of total

Expenditure

Source	Expenditure	% of total

Task 3.2

Download the party manifestos for the 2010 general election:

Conservative party

http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where_we_stand/Cleaning_Up_Politics.aspx

Labour party

http://www.labour.org.uk/manifesto/a-new-politics-renewing-our-democracy-and-rebuilding-trust

Liberal Democrat party

http://network.libdems.org.uk/manifesto2010/libdem_2010_yoursay.pdf

What do the major parties have to say, if anything, about the funding of political parties?

Chapter 4

Political parties: policies and ideas

Task 4.1

1. Log on to the *Political Compass* website at http://www.politicalcompass.org and read the welcome page. If you are happy to proceed, click on the 'take the test' link in the penultimate paragraph.
2. Complete the test and print out your result.
3. Do you feel that this is an accurate reflection of your political outlook?
4. If not, why not?
5. Compare your result with the result for the 2010 general election, which you can find at http://www.politicalcompass.org/ukparties2010
6. Does this surprise you?
7. Why? (Or why not?)
8. Return to the home page (www.politicalcompass.org) and explore the results for different countries at recent general elections.
9. Does anything strike you about any of these outcomes?

Task 4.2

Use the internet to find the meanings of as many of the terms listed below as you can.

|			
➢ democracy	➢ paparchy	➢ gerontocracy	➢ theocracy
➢ autocracy	➢ timocracy	➢ communism	➢ anarchy
➢ absolutism	➢ theocracy	➢ marxism	➢ plutocracy
➢ totalitarianism	➢ pantisocracy	➢ bolshevism	➢ gynarchy
➢ fascism	➢ militocracy	➢ christianity	➢ technocracy
➢ oligarchy	➢ exarchy	➢ aristocracy	➢ patriarchy
➢ androcracy	➢ bureaucracy	➢ monarchy	➢ hagiarchy
➢ prochocracy	➢ ecclesiarchy	➢ republic	

1 Which of the terms would you class as an ideology? Why?
2 Which would you class as a form of rule? Why?
3 Which would you class as neither? Why?

You may find a table like this a useful way to record your initial thoughts.

Term	Meaning	Ideology?	Form of rule?	Neither?
Democracy				
Autocracy				

Chapter 5

Pressure groups
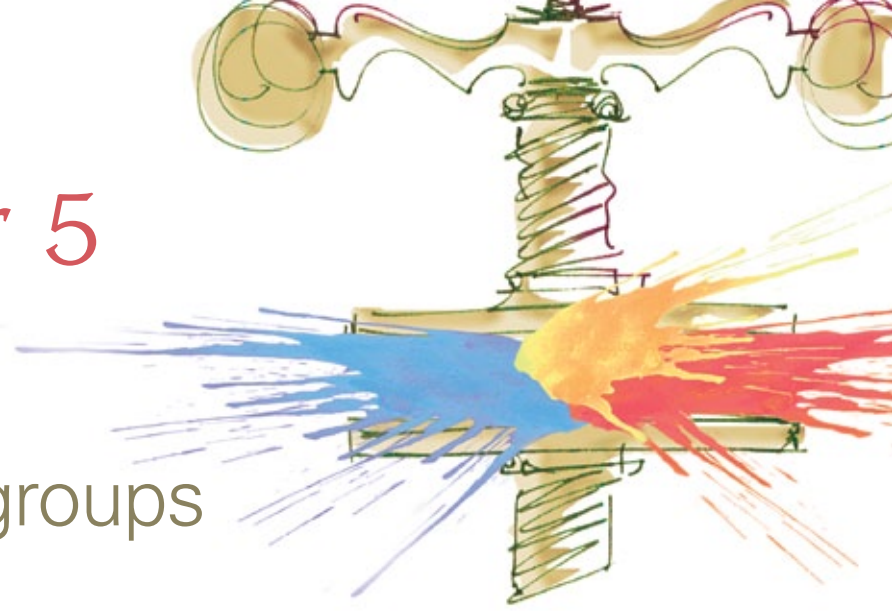
Task 5.1

Log on to a range of pressure-group websites. A number are listed below, but you could search for others that you are particularly interested in. For each one, see how much you can find out about:

➢ their aims
➢ their organisation
➢ their membership
➢ the methods they use
➢ how successful they have been

The pressure groups

http://www.amnesty.org.uk — the website of Amnesty International

http://www.copa-cogeca.be — the website of COPA–COGECA

http://www.countryside-alliance.org.uk — the website of the Countryside Alliance

http://www.dogstrust.org.uk — the website of the Dogs Trust

http://www.equalityhumanrights.com — the website of the Equality and Human Rights Commission

http://www.greenpeace.org.uk — the website of Greenpeace

http://www.nspcc.org.uk — the website of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

http://www.rspb.org.uk — the website of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

http://www.sas.org.uk — the website of Surfers Against Sewage

http://www.stopwar.org.uk — the website of the Stop the War Coalition

http://www.unlockdemocracy.org.uk — the website of Unlock Democracy

http://www.wwf.org.uk — the website of the Worldwide Fund for Nature

Using this information, for each group consider the following questions:
1   What sort of group is it? Sectional? Cause? Single issue? Insider? Outsider?
2   How effective has it been? What success has it had?
3   Do its activities enhance or threaten democracy?

Task 5.2

Think of something in society that you would like to change.

Using the knowledge and understanding you have gained from the previous task, and also from your study of politics and government more generally:
➢ create a set of specific aims
➢ devise a campaign to achieve these aims that is both practical and likely to be effective

1   What problems do you think you will face in achieving your aims?
2   How could you overcome them?
3   What would you do if you could not achieve your aims?

Chapter 6

The constitution

Task 6.1

Go to Richard Kimber's *Politics Resources* website at http://www.politicsresources.net/. Click on 'Constitutions' and choose one. Try to find the answers to the following questions. You may find it easier to do this for some constitutions than others, so choose your constitution wisely.

1   How long is the constitution? How many articles or sections? How many words?
2   Is there a preamble? What, broadly, does it say?
3   What does the constitution cover?
4   What is the role of the legislature?
5   What powers does the legislature have?
6   What is the role of the executive?
7   What powers does the executive have?
8   What is the role of the judiciary?
9   What powers does the judiciary have?
10   Are there any obvious limits on the power of the government?
11   Does the constitution contain any protections for individual rights, such as a bill of rights? What rights are included?
12   Is the constitution 'entrenched'. And if so, how?
13   Can the constitution be amended? And if so, how?

Task 6. 2

The constitution of New Zealand is based upon the Treaty of Waitangi (1840). Go to Richard Kimber's *Politics Resources* website at http://www.politicsresources.net/. Click on 'Constitutions', 'New Zealand' and then 'Treaty of Waitangi'.

1 In what ways does the New Zealand constitution differ from most other constitutions in the world?
2 What are the advantages and disadvantages of a constitution like New Zealand's?

Task 6.3

1 If you had to write a 'written' constitution for the UK, what problems would you face?
2 Using information from the previous tasks, and your own knowledge, draft a new constitution for the UK.

Chapter 7

Parliament

Task 7.1

Find out as much as you can about your local MP.

For example:

What is their age? Gender? Ethnicity? Religion?

➢ What is their background? Where were they educated? What did they do before they became an MP? Where did they live?

➢ What are their main political interests?

➢ What is their electoral record? How many elections have they fought? How many have they won? What is their current majority?

➢ When and where do they hold their surgeries?

➢ How much are they paid? What allowances are they entitled to? How much have they claimed? What have they claimed for?

➢ What do they do in Parliament? What posts they have held? What committees have they sat on? Have they ever been a member of the government?

➢ What is a typical day/week/month like for them?

➢ What administrative support do they have to help them carry out their job?

➢ When did they last speak in the House of Commons? On what? And what did they say?

➢ Have they ever rebelled against their party? Over what? When? Why?

You will find some information on the parliament website at http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/ but many MPs have their own websites as well. Search the web for your MP and see what you can find. You may find the website http://www.theyworkforyou.com useful as well.

You could also search Hansard. Go to http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/ and click on 'Hansard'.

When you have gathered this information, ask yourself the following questions:
1 Does it matter if your MP is not 'typical' of you?
2 Does it matter if your MP did not originally come from your area?
3 How much should MPs be paid? Why?
4 What is it reasonable to expect your MP to do for you?
5 How much does your MP contribute to the functions of Parliament?
6 Are MPs entitled to rebel?

Task 7.2

Using up-to-date examples of the House of Commons at work will always enhance an answer to an exam question. Use the 'Parliamentary business' page on the parliamentary website (http://www.parliament.uk/business/) to find examples of:

➢ questions asked recently at question time
➢ questions asked recently at prime minister's question time
➢ debates on current legislation
➢ debates on secondary (delegated) legislation
➢ debates on non-legislative topics
➢ debates on subjects chosen by the opposition
➢ debates, legislative or otherwise, on subjects chosen by backbench MPs
➢ the work of department select committees
➢ the work of other types of select committee
➢ the work of general committees (previously known as 'standing committees')
➢ MPs rebelling against the party line

You will need to follow the hyperlinks, for example, to House of Commons publications, to find some of them. An analysis of party rebellions can be found at http://www.revolts. co.uk

Task 7.3

Use the Parliament website to find the current composition of the House of Lords by type of peer, party allegiance and gender:

http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/lords/lords-by-type-and-party/

Is membership of the House of Lords still a matter of political concern? Why?

Task 7.4

In the popular imagination, the House of Lords is often regarded as a nineteenth century gentlemen's club. But the Lords (and MPs) blog, twitter and YouTube like anyone else. For example, have a look at these websites:
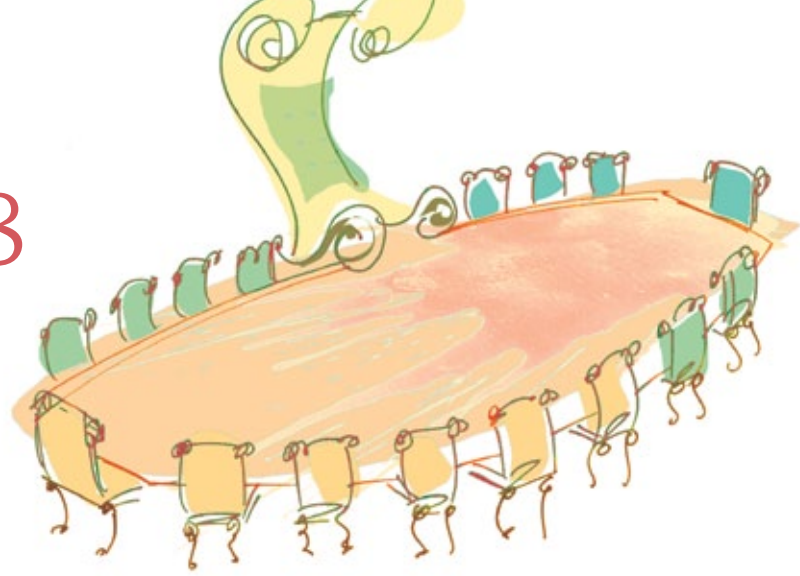
http://lordsoftheblog.net/

http://twitter.com/ukparliament

www.youtube.com/UKParliament#p/c/03FFE1F0B34AA057

What light, if any, do they throw on the work of peers in particular and Parliament in general?

Chapter 8

The prime minister and the core executive

Task 8.1

1 Write a job specification for prime minister, listing:
➢ what the post-holder is expected to do
➢ what powers they will have
➢ what support they will have
➢ their terms and conditions of employment, including remuneration and holiday entitlement

2 Write a person specification for prime minister, listing:
➢ the qualifications that all candidates must possess and those that are desirable
➢ the experience that all candidates must possess and that which is desirable
➢ the personal qualities that all candidates must possess and those that are desirable

3 Read about Tony Blair's background at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/uk_politics/2007/blair_years/default.stm How far did his qualifications, experience and personal qualities fit him for the job of prime minister in 1997?

4 Do the same for David Cameron.

Task 8.2

Read about Tony Blair as prime minister at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/uk_politics/2007/blair_years/default.stm

1   What does the evidence suggest about Mr Blair's prime ministerial style?
2   What light do the articles throw on:
➢   the powers of a prime minister?
➢   the limits on the power of a prime minister?
➢   the debate about cabinet, prime ministerial and presidential government?

Task 8.3

Search the internet for a list of recent ministerial resignations, for example:

http://www.parliament.uk/briefingpapers/commons/lib/research/briefings/snpc-02432.pdf

Find out why these ministers resigned.

1   How many resignations were in response to the convention of collective responsibility?
2   How many were in response to the convention of individual ministerial responsibility?
3   How many were for other reasons?
4   In practice, how easy is it to distinguish between different types of resignation?

Task 8.4

Read the report of the Public Administration Select Committee on ministerial appointments from outside Parliament entitled *Goats and Tsars: Ministerial and other appointments from outside Parliament*, which you can find at:

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmpubadm/330/330.pdf

Do you think that in the UK's parliamentary system of government, appointing outsiders to be ministers is a good idea?

Chapter 9

Judges and civil liberties
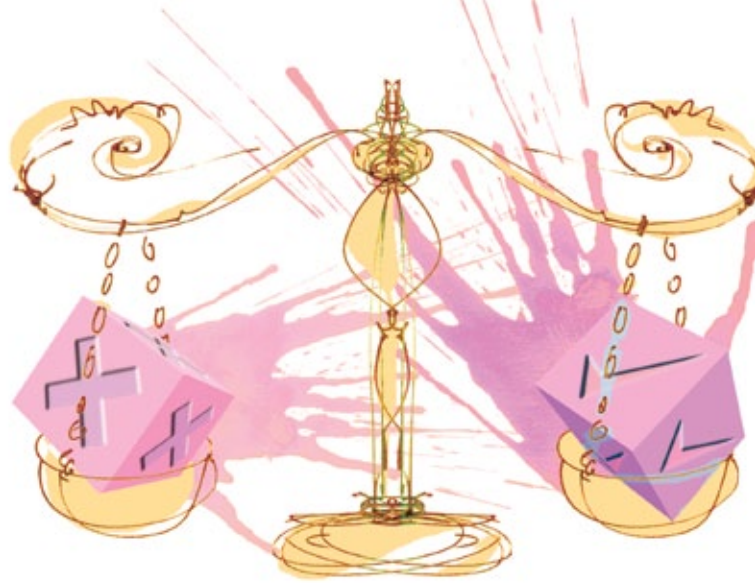
Task 9.1

Look at the statistics and the biographies of leading judges on the Judiciary of England and Wales website:

http://www.judiciary.gov.uk/about-the-judiciary/judges-magistrates-and-tribunal-judges/biographies

http://www.judiciary.gov.uk/publications-and-reports/statistics

1   Using the statistics and the biographies, produce an analysis of the age, gender, educational background (type of school attended, universities attended) and professional background of senior judges in England and Wales.
2   Should judges be more typical of the population of the UK as a whole? Why? Why not?

Task 9.2

Go to the UK Supreme Court's website at www.supremecourt.gov.uk/index.html. Click on 'Decided cases' and read the details of some the cases that have been decided recently. Look at both the judgements themselves and the press summaries.

What can you conclude about the court from what you have read?

Task 9.3

Liberty (also known as the National Council for Civil Liberties) is a pressure group founded in 1934 which 'seeks to protect civil liberties and promote human rights for everyone'.

Go to its website at www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk. Click on 'Issues' and explore some of its campaigns listed there.

Do you support Liberty's position on these issues? Why? Why not?

Task 9.4

Use the internet to find out more about the Human Rights Act (1998) and the arguments for and against it.

For example:

http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/henryporter/2009/mar/26/human-rights-law

Does what you have read suggest that Britain should have its own Bill of Rights? Or should we leave things the way they are? Why?

Chapter 10

Devolution and local government

Task 10.1

Go to Richard Kimber's *Politics Resources* website at http://www.politicsresources.net/ and click on 'Constitutions'. Scroll down the page until you come to a list of countries.

1 For a range of states, investigate what formal arrangements have been made for the decentralisation of power to regions by clicking on their constitutions and reading them.
2 According to these arrangements, categorise each state as a:
➢ unitary state
➢ federal state
➢ devolved (legislative devolution) state
➢ devolved (administrative devolution) state
3 What are the advantages, both to the state and the regions, of having a highly decentralised form of government?
4 What are the disadvantages?

Task 10.2

Look at each of the regional assembly websites:

www.scottish.parliament.uk — Scottish Parliament

www.assemblywales.org —National Assembly for Wales

http://www.niassembly.gov.uk — Northern Ireland Assembly

1 For each assembly:
➢ make a list of the services it provides
➢ find out how much it spends on each service

> ➢ find out what it provides for this money
> ➢ find out where the money comes from to pay for these services
> ➢ find out how much it costs to run the assembly
> ➢ find out how much freedom it has to raise and spend money
2   Is it worth it?

Task 10.3

1   Log on to your local council website and:
> ➢ make a list of the services it provides
> ➢ find out how much it spends on each service
> ➢ find out exactly what it provides for this money
> ➢ find out where the money comes from to pay for these services
> ➢ find out how much it costs to run the council itself
> ➢ find out how much freedom the council has to raise and spend money
> You may find that your local councillor can help you with this.
2   Go to the Local Government Association website and download the 2009 Annual
    Report:

http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/2110690

Read the section 'What We've Achieved Together' on pp. 8–10.
Is local government worth it?

Chapter 11

The European Union

Task 11.1

1   Search the party manifestos from the 2010 general election (see websites below) for references to the EU and construct a table to show where each party stood on 'Europe'.

Conservative

http://media.conservatives.s3.amazonaws.com/manifesto/cpmanifesto2010_lowres.pdf

Labour

http://www2.labour.org.uk/uploads/TheLabourPartyManifesto-2010.pdf

Liberal Democrat

http://www.general-election-2010.co.uk/2010-general-election-manifestos/Liberal-Democrat-Party-Manifesto-2010.pdf

UKIP

http://www.general-election-2010.co.uk/2010-general-election-manifestos/UKIP-Party-Manifesto-2010.pdf

BNP

http://www.general-election-2010.co.uk/2010-general-election-manifestos/BNP-Manifesto-2010.pdf

2   What justification, if any, do they offer for their positions?

Task 11.2

1 Go to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) website at:

   http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/global-issues/institutions/britain-in-the-european-union

   What is the official British attitude to Europe?
2 Look at the coalition's programme for government at:

   http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfg_coalition.pdf

   What was the attitude of the coalition government towards Europe when it was formed in May 2010?

Task 11.3

The Lisbon Treaty has been seen either as simply a tidying up exercise or an unacceptable extension of EU power.

1 Look at a summary of the Lisbon Treaty on the official EU website at:

   http://europa.eu/lisbon_treaty/glance/index_en.htm

   What exactly was agreed at Lisbon?
2 Now read the arguments for and against the treaty on the Civitas website at:

   http://www.civitas.org.uk/eufacts/FSTREAT/TR6.htm

   Which side of the argument do you agree with? Why?

Task 11.4

1 The official EU website lists the myths that are perpetuated about the EU. Read about them at:

   http://ec.europa.eu/unitedkingdom/press/euromyths/index_en.htm

   Why are there so many?
2 Some people claim that 84% of British legislation comes from Europe. Others claim that it is less than 10%. For example:

   http://liberalconspiracy.org/2009/06/03/what-percentage-of-our-laws-actually-come-from-the-eu/

   Use the internet to see if you can find out which is correct.
   Does it matter if it is 84% or 9%?