

General Certificate of Education
June 2004
Advanced Subsidiary Examination



GENERAL STUDIES (SPECIFICATION B)
Unit 2 Power

GSB2

Monday 24 May 2004 Afternoon Session

In addition to this paper you will require:
an 8-page answer book.

Time allowed: 1 hour 15 minutes

Instructions

- Use blue or black ink or ball-point pen.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book. The *Examining Body* for this paper is AQA. The *Paper Reference* is GSB2.
- Answer the question in **Section A** and **one** question in **Section B**.
- Do all rough work in your answer book. Cross through any work you do not want marked.

Information

- The maximum mark for this paper is 70.
- Mark allocations are shown in brackets.

Advice

- You should write your answers in continuous prose.
- You will be assessed according to your ability to:
 - select and use a form and style of writing appropriate to purpose and complex subject matter;
 - organise relevant information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate;
 - ensure text is legible, and spelling, grammar and punctuation are accurate, so that meaning is clear.

SECTION A

Answer this question.

- 1 Read the extracts opposite from *The Insider's Guide to Parliament* by an experienced MP.

Imagine that your own MP comes to your school or college, and that you have the chance to question him or her at some length. You raise questions about the powers of:

- the government
- MPs in Parliament
- the general public.

You are particularly keen to find out how *democratic* the political process is.

Write down your questions and the MP's answers, in the following way:

SELF: Do you agree that it's the Prime Minister who has the real power?

MP: Well, up to a point. I think... etc.

(40 marks)

TURN TO PAGE 4 FOR THE NEXT QUESTION

The Insider's Guide to Parliament

“What do I do if I am an idealist?” you may ask. Quite frankly if that is your problem then politics is definitely not for you. The Church maybe, a social worker possibly, but not politics. The art of government is to keep the show on the road. The government in a complex, modern technological society like ours cannot be expected to cope with whingers, dreamers, people who want to change things, shakers and movers or, unholy of unholies, those who believe that when they leave this world it will be a better place than when they entered it, thanks to their efforts.

Opinion polls show that the public sees the typical MP as being remote, irrelevant, ineffectual, selfish, over-ambitious and on the make. So if you do not want to look out of place in the House of Commons you must at least pretend to have some of these attributes.

Life is complicated for your constituents. So they need your help in getting them a council house, prosecuting their dreadful landlord, overcoming the negligence of their solicitor who has made a mess of that contract to build an extension to their house. They will ask you to regularise their immigration status, extract a rebate and an apology from their taxman, get the local Benefits Agency to use its discretion to increase their benefits, and complain on their behalf to everyone and every organisation whose name begins with one or other of the letters A to Z.

You are the local Ombudsman who redresses everyone's grievances and performs miracles when all else has failed. Of course you will get a lot of letters, but not as many as your colleagues boast about. Most weeks you will not get more than fifty new cases to deal with through your correspondence. Some people will insist on seeing you personally. So you will have to organise what are called 'surgeries', where you meet individuals who want to cry on your shoulder and make you as upset as they are. Expect fifteen to twenty people to turn up at your surgery. One third will have problems that only they can solve themselves; one third will have problems that you may be able to solve; and the rest will have problems that God Almighty could not solve.

In theory, everything that goes on in Parliament enables you to call Ministers to account: the debates, oral questions to Ministers, written questions to Ministers, the making of Statements by Ministers who then face an hour's grilling on the floor of the House of Commons, all the stages through which a Bill becomes an Act of Parliament, and the work of Select Committees. But at the end of the day, dispiritingly, you have to realise that there is a hierarchy of knowledge and that as a back-bench MP you are the bottom of the hierarchy, your position only marginally better than the position of the general public. So far as the government is concerned, the smooth running of Parliament depends on the existence of a large number of ignorant backbench MPs. Only try to change the system if you are without Ministerial ambition.

*Source: adapted from BRIAN SEDGEMORE MP,
The Insider's Guide to Parliament (Cambridge: Icon Books Ltd) 1995*

SECTION B

Answer **one** of the following essay questions.

You are advised to use examples to illustrate your answers where appropriate.

EITHER

- 2 “Three or four generations ago, religion made a powerful contribution to people’s lives. It shaped their thinking and their conduct. Today, religion has lost its hold on people: it has ceased to be relevant, or to matter.”

Argue **either** for **or** against this view.

You might consider the following in your argument:

- religious education in school
- religion in the media
- the influence of religious leaders
- whether science has all the answers.

(30 marks)

OR

- 3 “Television is the most addictive of all recreational drugs: 14 million Britons on average watch an episode of *Coronation Street* or *Eastenders*. They turn on, tune in, and drop out of the real world like kids on dope.”

How fair is it to compare television-viewing with drug dependence?

You might consider the following in your answer:

- documentary programmes
- soaps as serious social comment
- our need for an escape from reality
- whether the comparison is valid.

(30 marks)

END OF QUESTIONS