2.6 The Relationship Between the Executive and Parliament: 10-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 10 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. For extended, levels-marked questions write full sentences and construct a developed response.

1 State one consequence of a large Commons majority for the balance of power between executive and legislature, using the 1997 and 2001 Labour majorities as context.

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

2 Explain briefly how a small Commons majority or no overall majority can empower backbench rebellions, citing the 2017 to 2019 hung Parliament as context.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Analyse the extent to which backbench rebellions constrained the Conservative government between 2017 and 2019, with reference to specific Commons votes and outcomes.

(Total for Question 3 is 9 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.6 The Relationship Between the Executive and Parliament: 10-minute Pack

Question 1

one accurate consequence, e.g. the executive can usually pass legislation with little effective opposition, illustrated by the large Labour majorities 1997 and 2001 cao — **B1**

Answer: A large Commons majority lets the executive usually pass legislation with little effective opposition, as seen with the large Labour majorities after 1997 and 2001.

Question 2

identifies that a small or no majority makes each vote more critical, so individual MPs or small groups can change outcomes — **B1**

links to 2017-2019 context, e.g. the government needed support from other parties and dissenting Conservatives could block motions or force concessions — **B1**

Answer: When a government has a small or no overall majority, each Commons vote becomes critical and individual MPs or small groups can change outcomes; during the 2017 to 2019 hung Parliament the Conservative government relied on other parties and a small number of Conservative rebels could block or reshape government business.

Question 3

Level 0 No relevant content. — **0**

Level 1 Limited knowledge of the 2017-2019 period and backbench rebellions, with little developed analysis. — **1-3**

Level 2 Clear knowledge of some relevant votes and a basic analysis of how rebellions constrained the government, though the explanation may be partial. — **4-6**

Level 3 Detailed and well-evidenced analysis using specific Commons votes (e.g. meaningful votes on Brexit, indicative votes, defeats, and the Cooper-Letwin amendment), explaining how rebellions and external partners restricted executive options and led to negotiated outcomes. — **7-9**

Indicative content:

- Context: the June 2017 general election produced a hung Parliament; the Conservative Party formed a working arrangement with the DUP and had a small working majority.
- Key examples: the government suffered multiple parliamentary defeats on Brexit-related motions and amendments in 2017-2019, including defeats over the government timetable, the Cooper-Letwin amendment enabling indicative votes, and the crushing defeats of Theresa May's Withdrawal Agreement in January and March 2019, where Conservative Remain-leaning and opposition MPs combined to reject the government position.
- Mechanisms: Conservative backbench rebels, including the European Research Group and moderate Conservatives, used their numbers and occasional alliances with opposition MPs to block or amend government business, forcing concessions such as promises of indicative votes and additional Commons scrutiny.
- Constraints: the government had to negotiate with the DUP and accept procedural changes; defeats undermined the Prime Minister's authority and limited the executive's ability to unilaterally set the Brexit exit terms.
- Limitations and counter-evidence: the government could still use tactics like pairing, whipping and offering concessions to survive many votes; some defeats were reversed or limited in long-term effect, and ultimate resolution required executive negotiation with the EU as well as Parliament.
- Conclusion: rebellions significantly constrained the government between 2017 and 2019, producing real policy consequences and procedural concessions, though the executive retained tools to manage or survive many challenges and was not wholly controlled by backbenchers.

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