

Civil list

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- A civil list is a list of individuals to whom money is paid by the government, typically for service to the state or as honorary pensions. It is a term especially associated with the United Kingdom and its former colonies of Canada, India, New Zealand, Singapore and many more. It was originally defined as expenses supporting the monarch.

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- In the United Kingdom, the Civil List was, until 2011, the annual grant that covered some expenses associated with the Sovereign performing their official duties, including those for staff salaries, State Visits, public engagements, ceremonial functions and the upkeep of the Royal Households. The cost of transport and security for the Royal Family, together with property maintenance and other sundry expenses, were covered by separate grants from individual Government Departments. The Civil List was abolished under the Sovereign Grant Act 2011.

History

- Following the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the expenses relating to the support of the monarch were largely separated from the ordinary expenses of the state managed by the Exchequer. In 1697, Parliament under William III and Mary II fixed the Crown's peacetime revenue at £1,200,000 per year; of this about £700,000 was appropriated towards the Civil List. The accession of George III in 1760 marked a significant change in royal finances. As his predecessor, George II, had failed to meet all of the specific costs of the civil government in accordance with the previous arrangement, it was decided by the Civil List Act 1760 that George III would surrender the hereditary revenues from the Crown Estate to Parliament for the duration of his reign, and in return Parliament would assume responsibility for most of the costs of the civil government. Parliament would continue to pay the Civil List, which would defray the expenses of the Royal Household and some of the costs of the civil government. George III, however, retained the income from the Duchy of Lancaster.

- On the accession of William IV in 1830, the sum voted for the Civil List was restricted to the expenses of the Royal Household, removing any residual responsibilities associated with the cost of the civil government. This finally removed any links between the Sovereign and the cost of the civil government. On the accession of Queen Victoria, the Civil List Act 1837—which reiterated the principles of the civil list system and specified all prior Acts as in force—was passed. Upon the accession of subsequent monarchs down to Queen Elizabeth II, this constitutional arrangement was confirmed, but the historical term "Civil List" remained even though the grant had nothing to do with the expenses of the civil government. In 1931 George V decided to eschew the £50,000 due to him from the Civil List as a result of the Great Depression. As Keeper of the Privy Purse, Sir Frederick Ponsonby wrote to Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald to say that George had felt it was possible to reject the grant by "exercise of the most rigid economy" and that Queen Mary and other royal family members were "desirous that reductions in these grants should be made during this time of national crisis"

Elizabeth II

- The last British monarch to receive Civil List payments was Elizabeth II. The Civil List for her reign lasted from her accession in 1952 until its abolition in 2012.

During this period the Queen, as head of state, used the Civil List to defray some of the official expenditure of the monarchy.
- Only the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh and the Queen Mother ever received direct funding from the Civil List. The Prince of Wales and his immediate family received their income from the Duchy of Cornwall. The state duties and staff of other members of the Royal Family were funded from a parliamentary annuity, the amount of which was fully refunded by the Queen to the Treasury.

- The last two decades of the Civil List were marked by surpluses and deficits. Surpluses in the 1991–2000 Civil List caused by low inflation and the efforts of the Queen and her staff to make the Royal Household more efficient led to the accrual of a £35.3 million reserve by late 2000. Consequently, the Civil List was fixed at £7.9 million annually in 2001, the same amount as in 1991, and remained at that level until its abolition. The reserve was then used to make up the shortfall in the Civil List during the subsequent decade. The Civil List Act 1972 forbade Parliament from reducing any of these payments.

Civil List pensions

- These are pensions traditionally granted by the Sovereign from the Civil List upon the recommendation of the First Lord of the Treasury. The Civil List Act 1837 applied the condition that any new pensions should be "granted to such persons only as have just claims on the royal beneficence or who by their personal services to the Crown, or by the performance of duties to the public, or by their useful discoveries in science and attainments in literature and the arts, have merited the gracious consideration of their sovereign and the gratitude of their country."