



Lecture 5


BRITISH

ELECTORAL

SYSTEM

General elections

- are held at least every 5 years
- The PM chooses the date (usually the time that gives as much advantage for his party as possible).
- Then he asks the Queen to dissolve the Parliament.



- *election campaigning* - about 3 weeks with large-scale press, radio and TV coverage.

- *Candidates* may be from a political party or they may stand as an “Independent”.

Who can become a candidate?

- over 18 years of age,
- a British citizen, or citizen of a Commonwealth country or the Republic of Ireland.

- pays £500 to a **Returning Officer** (= a person responsible for elections in a particular constituency).
- doesn't have to be a member of a political party.

- BUT! more chances for those who represent one of the 3 main British political parties or a nationalist or unionist party in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.



- **Polling Day** (usually on a Thursday

- a working day

- the *polling stations* are open till late.



By-elections

- when a seat in the House of Commons becomes vacant between general elections if an MP:
 - resigns from Parliament,
 - dies,
 - is made a peer,

- goes bankrupt,
- develops mental illness
- is convicted for a serious criminal offence.

By-elections can be held on any day.