

Who Calls The Shots Around Here?

Contributed by Dr. Janice Seto
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This weekend we've seen yet another controversy engulf the Royal Family, with questions asked as to why the Queen and her advisers didn't step in sooner to curtail the decision of the new Mr and Mrs Phillips to sell the rights to the royal wedding to a glossy magazine.

As Dr. Janice Seto examines, the reality is that it isn't always clear exactly who calls the shots when it comes to the public role of royalty and politicians....

Who calls
the shots around here?

That is exactly what people want to know about their leaders. And in this day and age of 24/7 media coverage, we are increasingly aware it is not always the obvious candidates, those whose job it is to represent the people.

Were Tony Blair and his successor as British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, political soul mates?

{jumi
[includes/jumies/rectangle.php]}Alternatively, looking towards the royal households, is Crown Prince Alois closer to his father, the reigning Prince of Liechtenstein, than the Prince of Wales is to his mother, Elizabeth II?

And would the abdication of December 1936 have occurred had King Edward VIII had been closer to his heir presumptive, his brother Prince Albert, Duke of York?

There
are
three categories we should examine in our attempt to discover where the real power lies: spouses, friends, and religious leaders.

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[includes/jumies/rectangle.php]}In the context of the ongoing, increasingly heated debate in the American Democratic party's race for the presidency, I thought I'd offer readers of The Royalist some examples of all three with a focus on the last - the woman of faith and the man of the cloth.

King George VI and his consort, the late Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, were a team, one which was especially lauded for the role they played during the dark days of World War II.

Similarly, Prince George of Denmark was credited for his support for Queen Anne.

Meanwhile, the dignity of Queen Fabiola of the Belgians and her late husband, King Baudoin I, helped keep that country together, despite the fact Belgium consists of three separate regions.

Elsewhere, Queen Ingrid's influence aided a change in the succession laws of Denmark, one which ensured that her three daughters would inherit upon the death of her husband, King Frederik, in turn bypassing the claims of his heir, the family of Prince Knud.

On the other hand, the consorts of Mary I Tudor, Mary Queen of Scots, and Elizabeth II were distrusted.

Philip II of Spain gained the title of King of England, but with the prestigious moniker borne of his title came no power.

{jumi
[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}The second husband of Mary, Queen of Scots, was her 19-year-old English cousin, Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley.

Following Mary I's example, she installed her husband as King Consort of Scotland.

This move invariably caused difficulties. Henry Stewart chafed at his limits, conspiring against his wife, in the process stirring up trouble.

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}The last straw for the Scots was Mary's third husband, James Hepburn Earl of Bothwell – the Scottish nobles decided they had had enough of the queen's poor leadership and forced her to abdicate in favour of her only child, the infant James.

Looking

to our more recent past, Prince Philip (the Duke of Edinburgh) was allowed to marry his 'Lilibet' in 1947, but only if he renounced his status as Prince of Greece and gave up public contact with his sisters, all of whom had married Germans

Sometimes

the power behind the throne rests with family.

Mary Queen of Scots' first mother-in-law, Catherine di Medici, took her revenge on Diane de Poitiers, the cougar mistress of her husband, Henri II of France, immediately after his death in a jousting tournament.

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}Diane's influence over state matters ceased abruptly as the new Queen dowager took over.

This alluring confidante of Henri AND his father, Francois I, was exiled from court. She wasn't even permitted to spend her remaining days in her dream home, the Chateau de Chenonceaux.

Instead, Diane was forced by an embittered Catherine to exchange this beautiful estate for a mundane country house.

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[includes/jumies/rectangle.php]}Catherine as queen mother went on to play the mother role – the likes of which cinemagoers witnessed in *The Manchurian Candidate* - for her three sons: Francois II (the first husband of Mary Queen of Scots); Henri III and Charles IX, in the process plunging France into religious wars which continued for over a century.

The battles included the infamous St Bartholomew's Day massacre of Protestants in Paris to celebrate the wedding of Catherine's daughter, Marguerite, to the Protestant Bourbon, Henri de Navarre, in line for the French succession.

This past

century, the world has witnessed modern-day versions of the royal power couple.

Bill and Hillary Clinton are a 21st Century version of America's war-time President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his wife, Eleanor....or, critics might say, perhaps even the modern-day Macbeths?!

Part of the evidence that Democratic candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton gives for her candidacy are her 35 years' experience.

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}It's notable that this equals the length of her partnership and marriage to Former President Bill.

There is no doubt one gains a tremendous amount of access to the Oval Office via marriage to a President.

However, Hillary can't have it both ways.

If her vaulted experience in foreign and domestic policy comes mostly from the Clinton White House years, then she has to also take responsibility for its spectacular failings.

During the 2-for-1 presidency, she could not secure backing for a universal health care system. In those crucial first years when the Democrats had support from the people and the legislative branches, universal health care should have been a done deal.

However, Hillary's inept shepherding dissipated all the goodwill and drive that was going for it. And so another generation of Americans has no access to any version of the National Health.

And can
Hillary really claim credit for the Irish peace process?

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[includes/jumies/rectangle.php]}It's a claim which politicians and peacemakers in Dublin, Belfast, and London openly admit to finding risible.

As for the dodging-sniper-fire visit to Bosnia, footage from CBS News affirmed actor Sinbad's account of a peaceful arrival. Bill Clinton basically attributed her tall tale to 60-year-old Hillary experiencing a senior moment, one which

came towards the end of an almost interminable process to find a Democratic candidate for President.

All of which prompts the question: Can the American people trust someone who has a tendency for such blatantly ridiculous 'senior moments' to answer the phone at 3am?

But I digress.....

With Friends Like This.....

As Rick Blaine said in Casablanca: "I stick out my neck for nobody."

Speaking for myself, I harbour sadness at the many friends of royalty (past and present) who naively believe this does not apply to them.

Despite years of standing by with a hanky or a reassuring shoulder, the friend will not always get paid in kind.

Except for the odd John Brown and David Ricardo, royals rarely show as much long-term loyalty to friends.

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}The reason?

They are not just involved in a standard friend-to-friend relationship.

The royal friendship has to take into account the impact on matters of State.

When a friend hits a controversial spot of bother, the royal will run for cover...or they'll be influenced to haul anchor without so much as a thank you or fare thee well.

Paul Burrell is the latest and most high profile example of this sad fact-of-royal-life.

As former butler to Diana, Princess of Wales, he was there at considerable personal sacrifice whenever she needed help – day or night.

Unfortunately for Burrell, the 36-year-old princess's unexpected death also heralded the end of his job and financial security.

Someone could have offered him another similarly prestigious position in the Royal Household but it didn't happen.

Burrell was publicly sacked from The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund by spiteful board members and made virtually unemployable by the criminal charges and long trial, all of which could have been halted at a much earlier point had the Queen spoken up before the eleventh hour.

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[[includes/jumies/rectangle.php]]With a family to support, and no meaningful 'thank you' from any of the three Wales princes, did Paul Burrell have much choice but to turn entrepreneur and sometime star of TV reality shows and the lucrative lecture circuit?

Like Sarah, Duchess of York, he's increased his fame and fortune by leaving the UK, penning several books and giving numerous interviews to media across the globe.

Rather than live on the dole, Burrell has displayed a plucky nature.

Within
the royal household the rule is simple: If the friend is embarrassing, that person has to go (or go underground like Guy Pelly and the Wales brothers).

So Falstaff was repudiated by Henry V most spectacularly in Shakespeare:

"Old man, I know thee not."

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[includes/jumies/rectangle.php]}After friendship between the bossy and over-bearing Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough and compliant Queen Anne turned sour, the duchess was banned from court.

More recently – and against her wishes – Sarah, Duchess of York had little option but to heed the advice of her mother, Susan Wright Barrantes, who essentially told 'Fergie' at the height of the controversy over her friendship with Texan Steve Wyatt: "Chill him."

If the commoner is tired of the demands of friendship with a royal, one way to quickly jettison your pal is to talk to the press.

Following the example of her steely mother, the Queen herself never spoke to her governess, Marion Crawford, following the publication of *The Little Princesses*.

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[includes/jumies/rectangle.php]}Similarly, Australian beauty Dale, Lady Tryon, found 'Kanga' off the Prince of Wales Christmas card list for going public a little too often about her royal friendship (romance?).

Now if going public bolsters the image of the royal, that is another situation altogether.

Those such as Nicholas Soames MP who spoke out in support of Prince Charles during the media-led 'War of the Waleses' stay within the circle.

Invariably, many of the loyal royal exes also find their phone calls put through by the Palace switchboard.

Koo Stark has continued to maintain her discretion in interviews published since her early 1980s romance with Prince Andrew.

However, friends can't always be relied upon to be quite so discreet.

{jumi
[[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]]The jury is still out in Denmark, where Crown Princess Mary has faced not a little embarrassment thanks to the loose-lips of her best friend and bridesmaid, Amber Petty.

She was deemed to be an unsuitable choice as godmother to Mary and Frederik's children, prompting Amber to go public with her disappointment.

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[[includes/jumies/rectangle.php]]Now a radio personality in her Australian homeland, Ms Petty's 'done a Fergie' by telling stories about her own private life, such as her delight at finding herself enjoying a passionate kiss with a younger man during a New Year's party.

While maintaining this tie to her pre-Frederik days helps keep Mary sane and connected to her pre-royal self, some might question whether it's all that sensible?

One's Connection With God:

Raise
your hands, everybody, to return to those days of the Church being in charge of the country.

What, no takers?

In Europe, no one wants to go back in time to wars of religion.

Although the royal may practice his or her faith, the church is no longer the dominant player in political life in Europe.

{jumi
[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}In order for monarchies to survive these days, likewise royal duty rises above personal beliefs....and sometimes (but not always) personal pleasures.

In 1955, the Church of England put paid to Princess Margaret's desire to marry her swain, divorcee father-of-two Group Captain Peter Townsend.

In the past decade, the church has bent enough to bless the royal weddings of a divorcee, a single mother, and at least four women who had in their youth cohabited with previous boyfriends.

{jumi
[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}In some parts of the world, however, religious leaders continue to exert a powerful influence over the psyche and behaviour of royalty, and the role of the sovereign is intertwined with the fortunes of this very conservative section of society.

Even in the East, royals cannot turn their ears to the religious figures at the expense of the people.

The new constitution of Japan re-built it from a nationalistic Shinto-based empire into a constitutional monarchy.

When someone strays, the royal often (but not always) pays, as shown in these examples.

When Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands alluded to religious extremism in her New Year's address, she was bluntly told: 'Stay out of it'.

Her opinions on gay marriage and Princess Maxima's advocacy of this issue have raised eyebrows.

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}Over half a century earlier, the reliance of Queen Juliana of The Netherlands on Gret Hoffmans, the faith healer who was first employed to treat Princess Cristina's vision, almost cost Beatrix's mother the throne and her marriage.

In 1990, King

Baudoin I of the Belgians, backed by his conservative Spanish consort, Queen Fabiola, abdicated for a day to avoid signing into law an abortion bill in Brussels.

This may have been a personally sensitive matter as the Queen had suffered five miscarriages and ultimately bore the king no children.

Although people admired Baudoin's loyalty to his faith, his decision to initiate a 24-hour republic in Belgium did not go down well with the political establishment.

Not that the king, who died in 1993, is alone in the history books for having allowed his personal ethics to dictate (however briefly) his public role.

The Saxe-Coburg family came to power in 1831 when Prince Leopold, widower of the late Princess Charlotte of Wales, was invited to the throne .

He duly vowed to uphold the constitution and rule of the people.

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[includes/jumies/rectanglew.php]}Have you ever known Queen Elizabeth II to refuse to sign any laws passed by her parliament?

Of course not.

What is

clear is that the leader's chief responsibility has nothing to do with religion. And a divisive religious figure associating within the corridors of power can derail the leader's effectiveness.

Take the public airing of a rabble rousing man of the cloth as the chief spiritual advisor for the leader and you wonder about his impact on said figure.

No, I am not referring to the now infamous Reverend Wright and Democratic candidate Senator Barack Obama, but to the infamous Rasputin and the Russian Empress

Alexandra and her husband, Tsar Nicholas II.

Rasputin's influence over Alexandra led directly to the assassinations in 1918 inside the basement in Ekatarinberg.

The inept tsar had taken control over Russia's World War I effort, leaving conservative Alexandra in de facto control over domestic issues.

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[includes/jumies/rectangle.php]}The Empress's powerful influence over her uxorious husband was comically depicted in the Prince John mini-series, The Lost Prince. Essentially, thanks to Alexandra, the 'mad monk' Rasputin in effect had control over a vulnerable and agitated Russia. (Pop group Boney M recounted a somewhat accurate Greek chorus on the matter in their pop song, Rasputin - a great exercise song, if I may add.)

The story of the tragic fate of the Romanovs is only now coming to a close.

Royals across the globe may have breathed a collective sigh of relief earlier this month when it was revealed that DNA samples have confirmed that archaeologists have indeed retrieved the remains of the last two missing members of the slain Romanov family.

So....the
answer to our question of 'Who calls the shots around here?'

It's one which the surviving monarchies of the world should heed, for the answer is quite simply: 'We, the people'.