**House of Commons**

**Composition of the House of Commons**

The lower House of the British Parliament I.e. the House of Commons is purely an elected body having more than 650 seats. Among these seats England has the highest share of about 523 seats, followed by Scotland with 72 seats, Wales with 38 seats and Northern Ireland with 17 seats. The representatives of the House are elected by the British citizens above the age of 18, on the basis of universal adult franchise. All British citizens above the age of twenty one can contest election for a seat in the House of Commons. Certain categories of persons are excluded from contesting election like minors, bankrupts, lunatics, criminals, Clergymen of three historic churches, peers of England, Scotland, Wales or holders of profits under the Crown. The House of Commons has a term of five years unless dissolved by the Queen/King on the advice of the Prime Minister. During emergency the term of the House may be extended. The Speaker is the presiding officer of the House who is selected by the members from amongst themselves. He works as a neutral and non-partisan person, neither as a member of the majority nor the minority.

**Powers and Functions of the House of Commons**

The House of Commons exercises tremendous power and authority in the Parliamentary system of Britain. It has wide ranging powers starting from legislative to judicial powers. These powers are discussed under the following heads-

1. **Legislative powers:** In a unitary system of government law making on all subjects and for all people is done by its legislature. In Britain this function is invariably performed by the Parliament. If a bill is passed by the House of Commons, it is sent to the House of Lords which pass the bill with or without amendment. It is the discretion of the House of Commons whether to accept or reject the proposed modification. The House of Lords can just delay the passage of the bill but it cannot reject the bill altogether. If a bill originates in the House of Lords and sent to the Commons for approval it is the discretion of the House of Commons to accept or reject the bill. Thus, the House of Commons has more power in the law making of the Parliament.
2. **Financial Powers:** The British Parliament exerts great powers in the financial matters of the country. The finance of the nation and all financial deals of the country are controlled and managed by the Parliament and in turn by the House of Commons. The Parliament Act of 1911 entrusts more financial power on the House of Commons. A money bill and the budget can be introduced only in the House of Commons. It is the prerogative of the Speaker of the House of Commons to decide whether a bill is money bill or not. A money bill passed by the House of Commons goes to the House of Lords which can only delay the bill for a maximum period of one month. After that, the bill is taken as passed by the House and sent to the Queen for her assent. The Queen has no veto power to reject the bill. Thus the passage of the money bill depends entirely on the House of Commons.
3. **Executive Powers:** The House of Commons uses its power over the real executive of the country. The executive body, i.e. the minister is individually and their cabinet is collectively responsible to the House of Commons. Through its various means the House of Commons puts a check on the ministries so that they every decision of the Cabinet and every policy taken by the government must have the support of the members of the House of Commons; otherwise in every circumstances of the contrary view of the majority members, the House of Commons can take up this motion. By this way it may bind the government to resign in case the ministry fails to get majority support. The members of the House of Commons can put questions and supplementary questions to the ministers. The ministers are bound to reply to these questions. Questioning in the House of Commons fulfils the constant demand of information about governmental policies. It brings into light the work of various departments under public scrutiny.
4. **Judicial Powers**: The House of Commons in its judicial capacity recommends the Monarch to remove a judge. It can punish the person guilty of the contempt of the House. It can investigate all the cases involving breach of privileges of its members and punish the guilty. The House of Commons can pass a constitutional law just like an ordinary bill. In this way it can amend the constitution.

Thus, the House of Commons exercises tremendous power, authority and influence in the Parliamentary system of Great Britain. It is one of the strongest lower houses in the world.