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Reforming the Honours system

We should not try to reform what is a rotten system. Instead we should abolish it. [The honours system is rotten for the following reasons.] It caters to, and inflates, human vanity. It is used to obtain the services of civil servants, members of the Armed Forces and other state employees on the cheap, paying them less than they could get in the private sector. It degrades the Queen, who nominally [(but not really, except for a few)], awards the honours. It encourages a debased political system, where honours are awarded to pay off party hacks and party donors. It cheapens charity, encouraging people to do charitable work in the expectation of being honoured rather than for true philanthropic motives. [It distorts the behaviour of those who hope for honours, making them kow-tow and "keep their noses clean".]

Instead of bestowing titles and letters after one's name (to be used only for swank), we should borrow from a military tradition which does neither: mention in despatches. Let those who act beyond the call of duty be officially mentioned in the nation's despatches. That would be honour enough.¹

¹ *The Times Register* (Debate), 5 January 2004 (words in square brackets omitted).