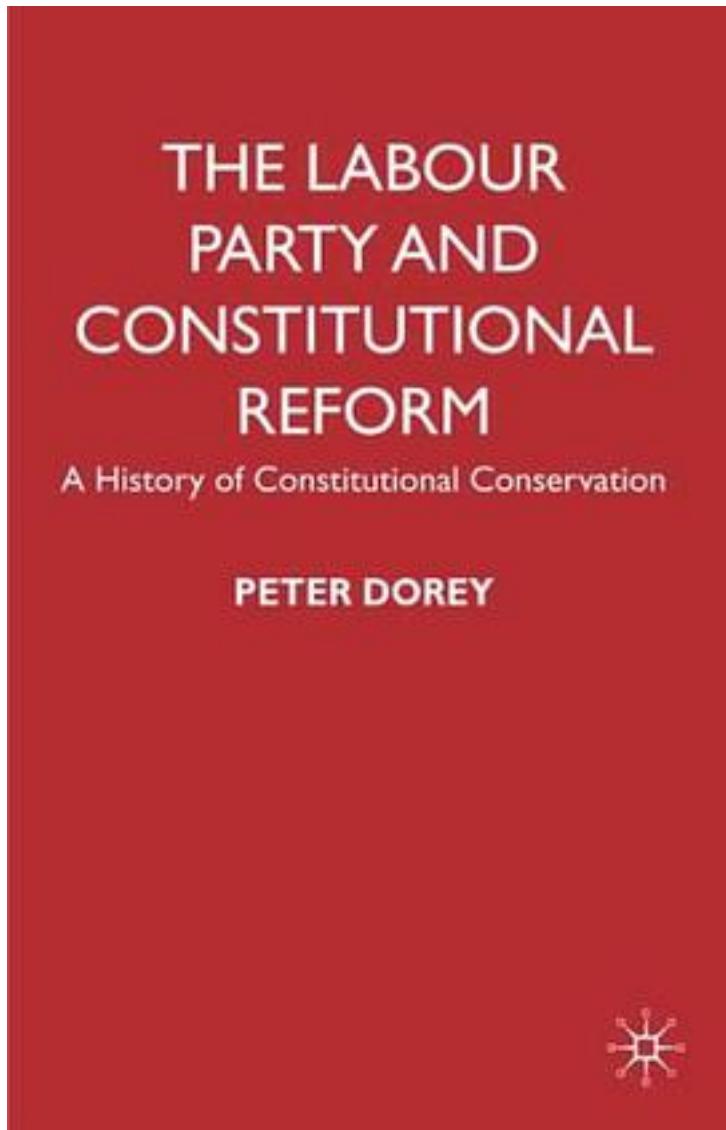


# The Labour Party and Constitutional Reform



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Although New Labour has introduced many more constitutional reforms than Old Labour, this apparent radicalism has nonetheless been based upon orthodox assumptions and objectives about the operation of Britain's political system. In this regard, New Labour has shared remarkable similarities with Old Labour. Both have largely opposed electoral reform for general elections due to a belief in strong, single party government at Westminster. This, in turn, has ensured that senior Labour politicians have not wanted to reform Parliament in a manner which might increase the power of the House of Commons, or the legitimacy of the House of Lords, because either would pose a threat to the authority of Labour governments. A similar top-down 'executive-minded' stance also underpinned the long-standing resistance to open government and freedom of information legislation. Meanwhile, devolution was historically resisted, and then only granted reluctantly and half-heartedly, and even then, only on the basis that it would strengthen the United Kingdom by weakening nationalist demands in Scotland and Wales. This book examines the nature and basis for Labour's constitutional conservatism, as well as the debates and disagreements within the Party which constitutional reform has variously prompted from 1906 to the present day.

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