

Non-fiction

Once the country was run by a coalition of businessmen, gentry, professionals and trade unionists. Now those in politics call the shots. By Samuel Brittan

The Triumph of the Political Class

by Peter Osborne

Simon & Schuster £18.99, 390 pages

FT bookshop price: £15.19

Crap: A Guide to Politics

by Terry Arthur

Continuum £9.99, 173 pages

FT bookshop price: £7.99

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Osborne shows in some detail that this new class is adept at feathering its own nest financially. The real harm of the new political class, however, is its deliberate emasculation of nearly all the institutions and procedures, ranging from the judiciary to the monarchy, parliament and the Civil Service, which can curb what Lord Hailsham once called "elective dictatorship".....

**On the surface Terry Arthur's Crap looks like a much lighter book. But open it almost at random and you will find a withering analysis of most government exhortations, plans and pledges, putting into simple English the analysis of the American Public Choice school of political economists.** The author falls down, however, in boasting that he never votes as he has no chance of influencing what happens. He confuses here the rational voter theorem, which states that a self-interested egoist has no incentive to vote, with a more general cynicism about politics and policies.