

Issued on behalf of Sweet & Maxwell

Blair: 54% more new laws every year than Thatcher

∞ **Research by Sweet & Maxwell**

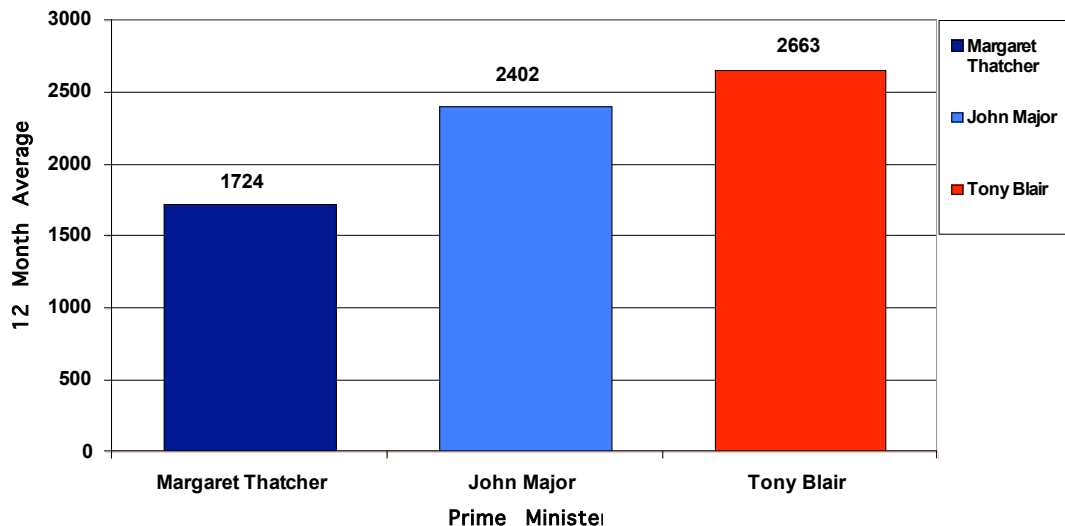
∞ **But biggest percentage increase in new legislation under Major**

Tony Blair has been responsible for 54% more new laws per year in office than Margaret Thatcher, reveals research by Sweet & Maxwell, the information provider. According to figures from Sweet & Maxwell's Westlaw UK and Lawtel online legal information services it is estimated that an average of 2,663 new laws were added every year under Blair, compared to an average of just 1,724 under Thatcher (graph below).

The statistics reveal that there has been a long term trend for each Government to legislate more aggressively than its predecessors. This has been most marked in areas such as criminal law, where 40 Criminal Justice Acts have been introduced since 1997, and employment law.

The Sweet & Maxwell research also shows that the biggest increase in legislative activity was under John Major. He introduced 39% more laws per year than Margaret Thatcher, whilst Blair enacted 11% more laws per year than Major.

Average legislation introduced during the last three Ministers' terms in office per annum



In total Tony Blair's administration was the most prolific, introducing a total of 26,849 new laws over his entire premiership. Margaret Thatcher introduced a total of 19,827 new laws during her time in power whilst John Major introduced 15,212 new laws during his much shorter regime.

Sweet & Maxwell says that it will be interesting to see whether the tide of legislation continues to rise at such a ferocious pace under Gordon Brown.

Len Sealy, Professor of Law, University of Cambridge, and a Sweet & Maxwell author; “I think that a lot of the legislation is not so much originated by governments as part of their policy but is a reactive response to what are perceived as the concerns of us as a society - fed from day to day by the media, which can make every bit of news into a crisis.”

“We have lived in recent years in a blame/compensation culture which demands that somebody does something about every accident or bit of misconduct, and politicians and their departments feel obliged to react. Whether this is an issue of health and safety, consumer protection, discrimination, putting a regulation on the books or increasing a penalty makes a political point, even if not always followed up by adequate funding or enforcement.”

“Similarly, we like to think that we are these days a much more caring community, and rather than leave this to the community to handle itself initiatives are often taken by government. Governments like to be seen to be doing something in the headlines.”

Professor Sealy points out that the Blair years have seen a dramatic increase in the amount of EU legislation that becomes law in the UK without it ever having to be passed through UK Parliament as a statute or statutory instrument (i.e. they would **not** be included in the above statistics).

Says Professor Sealy: “There were over 2,100 European Regulations in 2006. A random selection shows the huge range of subjects they cover: cross-border insolvency; importing of bed-linen; import values of certain fruit and vegetables; the buying-in of butter; evaluation of statistics on labour costs; access of poultry to open-air runs. All became law here without our legislators having to lift a finger.”

Professor Sealy says another recent phenomenon is not simply the number of statutes but also their size. Of the 2006 Acts, five had over 100 pages, three over 200, one over 300, one over 500 and one over 700! The Companies Act 2006, was the longest Act of 2006, and is also the longest Act in British Parliamentary history, with 1,300 sections, covering nearly 700 pages, and containing no less than 15 schedules.

The research by Sweet & Maxwell, a Thomson business (NYSE: TOC; TSX: TOC), shows that 98% of new legislation introduced over the last ten years have been introduced as statutory instruments.

Sweet & Maxwell explain that statutory instruments receive less Parliamentary debating time and, potentially, less scrutiny than statutes. It is why Governments prefer to use statutory instruments and opposing parties feel they stifle the scrutiny new legislation demands.

ENDS

Westlaw UK (www.westlaw.co.uk) was first introduced to the marketplace in 1999. Relied upon and used by the judiciary, law firms, barristers, academics, corporate lawyers and the public sector, Westlaw UK is known for its authoritative content and coverage.

Offering fully consolidated legislation back to 1267, case law back to 1865 and journal articles the service provides access to leading UK, EU, US and International news and business information plus the finest analytical content.

Re-launched just recently, the new Westlaw UK has been designed to reflect the way that legal research is carried out in the UK. It is now significantly easier to use and combines the very best content with a high performance online engine and improved functionality.

Lawtel UK (www.lawtel.com), established in 1980, changed the face of online legal information and is now the must-have service - used and relied upon every day by over 80,000 lawyers. Updated every 24 hours and offering instant access to UK and EU case law, legislation and articles coverage as well as a unique Update service, Lawtel provides fast, easy and intuitive access to daily changes in the law.

Sweet & Maxwell (<http://www.sweetandmaxwell.thomson.com>) is a leading provider of information and solutions to the legal and professional markets in the UK and Ireland. With over 200 years of history and heritage in legal publishing, Sweet & Maxwell offers detailed and specialist knowledge, understanding, interpretation and commentary across a wide range of subjects in a variety of formats to meet customers' needs - books, journals, periodicals, looseleaves, CD-ROMs and online services. Sweet & Maxwell is part of The Thomson Corporation.

The Thomson Corporation (www.thomson.com) is a global leader in providing essential electronic workflow solutions to business and professional customers. With operational headquarters in Stamford, Conn., Thomson provides value-added information, software tools and applications to more than 20 million users in the fields of law, tax, accounting, financial services, scientific research and healthcare. The Corporation's common shares are listed on the New York and Toronto stock exchanges (NYSE: TOC; TSX: TOC).

Press enquiries:

Professor Len Sealy
Tel: 01223 332 400

Nick Mattison or Paul Arvanitopoulos
Mattison Public Relations
Tel: 020 7645 3636

Peter Wylie
Corporate Communications Manager
Sweet & Maxwell
Tel: 020 7393 7000