

## A glimpse of the future

### Decentralise, economise, philosophise



THEY take place moments after each other, but there is often a jarring mismatch between the State Opening of Parliament and the Queen's Speech. The ritualised ceremony of the former is spectacular (if a trifle tedious once you've seen it before); the legislation outlined in the latter is often fiddly and disconnected.

Today was an exception. There was a lot in the speech – 22 bills, to fill an unusually long parliamentary session of 18 months. As befits a new government, there was also a connecting theme to the planned legislation. Many of the bills are aimed at devolving power from a state that both governing parties think is too centralised and bureaucratic. That shared idea is one reason to hope that David Cameron's Conservatives and Nick Clegg's Liberal Democrats will be able to cohabit in Whitehall for more than a few months - although it is not clear whether the parties' rank and file are as philosophically compatible as their leaders seem to be.

Local government will be given more powers, especially in areas such as housing and planning, though the bigger question of whether councils should have more tax-raising powers has been subjected to a review. Power will also be shifted beyond any level of government to people themselves: new schools can be set up and run at the expense of the state but independently of local-government control; voters will be able to elect an official to set priorities for their local police force; and any new European Union treaty that takes powers away from Britain will face a referendum.

As long as the fiscal crisis and fears of a return to recession persist, however, the economic measures in the Queen's Speech will command more attention than its promised reshaping of the state. The last government's planned increase in national-insurance contributions will be part-reversed, the Tories' long-heralded independent fiscal watchdog is to be launched and the journey to a later retirement age will begin.

Curiously, given the lack of money and the first wave of austerity measures announced yesterday, some spending commitments that would struggle to be described as "essential" made it into the Queen's speech, including plans for high-speed rail and more foreign aid. For all its talk of axe-wielding, today the government seemed keener to decentralise than to economise.

**Fonte: The Economist, May 25<sup>th</sup> 2010. Disponível em: <[www.economist.com](http://www.economist.com)>.**

**Acesso em: 26. maio 2010.**