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The year of the potato [1]

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Despite attempts [3] by Gordon Brown to cover up the continuing proliferation of quangos under his leadership, the *Sunday Times* has revealed [4] the truth: "13 out of 16 Whitehall departments failed to reduce their spending on quangos and seven departments created new ones, with more in the pipeline this year."

This is despite Brown claiming in 1995: "The biggest question ? is why our constitution is over-centralised, over-secretive and over-bureaucratic and why there is not more openness and accountability. The real alternative is a bonfire of the quangos and greater democracy."

Brown's 'bonfire' has gone the same way as his predecessor Tony Blair's claim to consign them to the "dustbin of history". Part of Brown?s initial appeal in when stepping up to lead the Labour Party appeared to be his dislike for unelected bureaucracy that undermined democracy. However, as the signing of the Lisbon Treaty (i.e. EU Constitution) has shown, his words were all bluster and held no real value. Thus, the growth of quangos under successive governments is still undermining British democracy.

The cost to British taxpayers is now truly astonishing. An investigation last year by the *Sunday Times* found [5] that a total of £180 billion was being spent on them, equivalent to £3,600 a year for every adult in Britain. Whether siphoned through tax or directly from industry, the amount of money tied up in bureaucracy is staggering. Laughable at a time in which everyone is feeling the pinch.

Is your money well spent? To get the answer simply visit the British Potato Council [6]. Did you know it was the year of the potato?

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