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The Tudor Royal Household and Parliament, 1509-1558

The main contentions of this paper were that the English Parliaments of the first half of the sixteenth century can be viewed as an extension of the monarch's entourage and that this overlap in membership explains why the Tudors had so little difficulty in managing most of their parliamentary sessions. Parliament met at Westminster in a royal palace and officials of the royal household were closely involved in the practical preparations. MP's were sworn in by the lord steward and the lord chamberlain. Even more importantly, the household servants usually continued to play key roles once the two Houses got down to business. This was partly a matter of sheer numbers. Calculating precise figures for the number of household servants elected to each Parliament is difficult. Not all MP's with court offices can be identified, so any calculations will tend to underestimate their numbers. Hawkyard however suggested that about one in five Members of the House of Commons in this period had jobs within the royal household, although the proportion was probably rather smaller under Mary I. Three courtiers – the treasurer of the household, the comptroller of the household and the vice-chamberlain – usually acted as the king's managers in the Lower House. Individual household servants were also used to move important pieces of legislation. Henry VIII even attended the Commons in person on at least two occasions. Although difficult to document in detail, the success rate for the passage of government business suggests that the household servants proved to be a dependable source of loyal support when it mattered most. **AB**