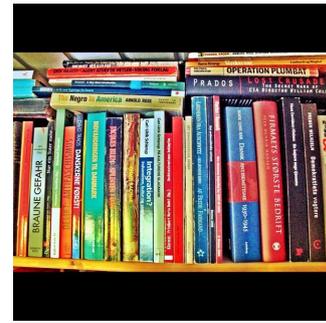


Book Shelf book reviews (20)



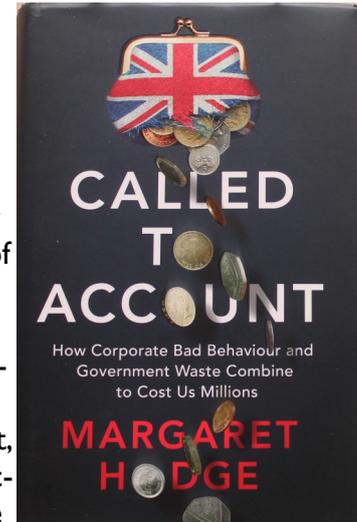
CALLED TO ACCOUNT

Author : Dame Margaret Hodge MP

Margaret Hodge, or to give her full title, Rt. Hon. Dame Margaret Hodge MP, has recently published a fascinating book under the title '**Called to Account**'.

In it she shares some of her experiences from the time between 2010 and 2015 when she chaired the **Public Accounts Committee**. This committee has the power and authority to call before it to account for their actions and decisions a wide range of people including ministers of government, civil servants, military officers, other public servants (including fire officers) and business men and women.

A summons to appear before Dame Margaret and her fellow cross party committee members must have been dreaded. Dame Margaret quickly gained a reputation for being a good inquisitor, sharp, forthright, unpredictable and not slow to show her outrage when the circumstances drove her to it. In short, the perfect person to chair that committee



Margaret Hodge

In her book, Dame Margaret reveals a great deal about how her committee uncovered some truly astonishing failures within Government departments that led and is still leading to £billions being wasted. The department that seems to be one of the most incredibly inefficient and therefore wasteful is the Ministry of Defence. The chapter headed '*Unconciable Waste*' relates something of the struggle her committee had to wring out of MoD officials the explanations and excuses for the many defence projects that have failed so badly and cost the tax payer eye-watering sums.

But in the following chapter (chapter 12) **Dame Margaret reveals her highly critical views formed after her committee investigated the disastrous attempt to regionalise fire controls.** For obvious reasons I found this to be of great interest. The Public Accounts

Committee clearly did a good job in quizzing the civil servants, politicians, fire officers, contractors and even the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott. These jointly carry the responsibility for the failure of this project and the shameful waste of about half a billion pounds of tax payers money.

The book also highlights how Government not only wastes money on a grand scale but also fails the public purse by collecting taxes inefficiently.

I found this book made me angry. The book itself is superbly written and not at all boring. My anger stemmed from the facts revealed in its pages. Why not buy a copy and see how it makes you feel? It is published by Little, Brown ISBN 978-1-4087-0807-1

JOHN CRAIG