



POLITEIA

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Let Freedom Reign! Economic Conservatism and Social Liberalism should guide Conservative Party in the 21st century

As the Conservative Party considers the direction which it must take for its future success and that of the country, Dr Liam Fox, the party's Shadow Foreign Secretary and former co-Chairman, discusses the principles which will guide the Conservative renaissance.

In a Politeia Address, Dr Fox suggests that the Conservative approach begins with 'a clear definition of the roles of the state and [that]...of the individual', to which 'freedom is the key'. Instead of the state being an 'entrapping web', it must function as 'an enabling framework'. In the two central areas, the economy and the public services, the first test for any policy must be 'does it increase or decrease the size of government. The second test must be, 'does it reinforce or diminish personal responsibility'.

Freedom is not only an end in itself. It 'allows the talented to excel and prosper... [and] offers practical, tangible solutions to poverty, to failing public services, and to people trapped in a life of dependence'. The state, he says, should guarantee everyone access to good healthcare, a good education and a system which brings security in retirement. But instead of creating an enabling framework to guarantee these things, the state has become instead a monopoly or near-monopoly provider. For the future it must allow people to choose for themselves in these vital areas of daily life. The people of this country should be able to make choices that are taken for granted in other European countries.

Dr Fox argues that the economy is being supplanted by a dangerously overblown state. The 'Intruder State', which interferes in every nook and cranny of our lives, driving us towards the "pocket money society" must be stopped. Individuals must keep more of their money and the state should make fewer decisions on their behalf. If the wealth producing sector continues to shrink while the wealth-consuming sector expands, the result will be simply incompatible with increasing prosperity. As Dr Fox says: "Last year, average incomes fell during a time of economic growth. This showed that the government is taking too much money in tax out of people's pockets." Dr Fox concludes by reminding us that free markets unencumbered by excessive regulation or taxation already work. That greater freedom and the exercise of personal responsibility are the best defence against an intrusive, oppressive, nannyng state.

Liam Fox is Conservative Shadow Foreign Secretary, having previously served as Co-Chairman of the party. His Politeia pamphlets include *Holding Our Judges to Account* (September 1999) and *Conservatism for the Future* (March 2004).