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Fox Urges Taxpayer Power Over Health and Education and an end to the Intruder State

As the people of this country pay the price of moving to a higher tax economy, the problem for the UK is quickly becoming that of 'the pocket money society'. Government, says Politeia's latest address, is taking too much of what we earn to spend not just on the essential matters of state, but on those things which concern our own daily life. Not only does it tax more and spend more on our behalf, but it regulates more, interfering in every nook and cranny of life. We are, as a result, poorer and our freedom is undermined. Control of our lives is seeping away to an ever bigger, bossier and more intrusive state. We are in danger of becoming a nation of supplicants, increasingly stripped of dignity and deprived of basic freedom.

In Politeia's Spring Address, *Conservatism for the Future*, Dr Liam Fox, the Co-Chairman of the Conservative Party, sets out an alternative course. The next Conservative Government, must roll back the Intruder State. This, he says: 'cannot be done by...running the Government a little better than Labour, by introducing fewer new taxes, employing fewer bureaucrats and resisting a few more regulations from Europe'. What is needed is reform, not mere containment. Taxpayers must be given control over the money they hand to government [and] professionals once again must control their work and fulfil their vocation.

The choice to be made, he explains, is a moral one. Though many on the left claim that expanding the state is a moral imperative, the reality is more sinister as state apparatus is used to gain control of an ever – increasing number of people. For instance the extension of means-tested benefits means that more people are drawn into ever greater dependency on the state, including the middle classes, those earning even as much as £55,000 a year and now 60 per cent of pensioners.

What is to be done? First the madness of taxing people, only to hand back the money in benefits, must be tackled. Second, those who pay for the public services must have greater rights over what they get, instead of the status quo today where taxpayers have no rights 'beyond the right to be allocated by the Government to a place on a waiting list...or for children...to be sent to a school at the local authority's discretion.' And there must be an end to the suffocation of hardworking professionals, doctors, nurses and teachers, by a government which intrudes daily on their professional judgements through regulation, directive and bureaucratic diktat.

For the future, taxpayers must retain control over how and where the money is spent. For the public services, they should have control over the spending made on their behalf. Conservative proposals for passports - both for education and health - are designed to give parents and patients more control. Moreover, the artificial barrier between public and private sectors must be broken down, so that, publicly funded public services, can be provided by the best provider, public or private and the user can decide. Dr Fox sets out a series of policy prescriptions to build on these principles and urges that the empowerment of individual citizens must go hand in hand with 'the "disempowerment" of the political classes' and the creation of a society where markets and

competition flourish in a new climate of aspiration. The task is a bold one: 'control must pass from the Intruder State to tax payers, professionals and people themselves'.

Conservatism for the Future, by Dr Liam Fox, is published by Politeia, 22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0QP at £3-00

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