



If this is Conservatism,
I am a Conservative

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Maurice Saatchi
June 2005

DEDICATION

THIS PAMPHLET IS DEDICATED to members of the House of Commons – an abused minority with no politically correct quango to defend them.

Members of Parliament most resemble one of the most attractive professions in our society – actors. They both live on the stage. Sir Ralph Richardson described his breed:

At precisely three minutes past eight we must dream.

But politicians (or the best of them) do more. They speak their own dreams, not Shakespeare's. And then take their punishment immediately, without waiting for the next day's reviews.

If Hamlet said:

Get thee to a nunnery

and the audience shouted out:

What are you doing about the shortage of nuns?

Or:

Why have you cut the nunnery building program?

it would be hard to carry on. But politicians must.

These days, parliamentarians receive very little praise. What they usually get is off-hand criticism from people who question their motives or behaviour.

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Yet the Hansards of the well-mannered and illuminating debates in the House of Commons bear witness that the place is overwhelmingly occupied by intelligent and responsible people, honestly striving by their own best lights to pursue the ideals for which the place stands.

Among them is the next Conservative leader – a man or woman who understands and worships Conservatism and, as Solzhenitsyn tells us, will prospect for real ideas with the unremitting zeal of a prospector hunting gold.

CHAPTER ONE

HOW I LOST THE ELECTION

AFTER MOST ELECTION DEFEATS, the race is to blame someone. Here, I blame myself. At the 2005 election, as Co-Chairman of the Conservative Party, I was given a once-in-a-lifetime (or perhaps several lifetimes) chance to banish the repulsive gloom of a decade of electoral unpopularity.

When my turn came to blow down the walls of Jericho, I failed. Here's why:

I DID NOT understand that Tory pragmatism had killed Tory idealism.

I DID NOT convince the Party that if you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything.

I DID NOT demonstrate the requirement for an iconic policy to prove good intent.

I DID NOT dispel the illusion of research, which said that, as immigration was the number one issue in deciding how people vote, it should be the number one topic.

I DID NOT manage to expose the myth of the 'target seats', which said that national polls were irrelevant because target seats were 'different'.

I DID NOT succeed in overturning the fiction of the focus groups, which can tell you what people are thinking, but not what you should be thinking.

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I DID NOT debunk the mirage of ‘professionalism’, by which marketing, advertising, mailing, calling etc. can outweigh the power of a simple vision.

I DID NOT overcome the traditional Tory desire to ‘travel light’, no baggage, no target, no hostage to fortune, nothing to copy.

I DID NOT prevent economics, the Conservatives’ former ace of trumps, becoming ‘a second order issue’.

I DID NOT forecast that a Labour Prime Minister would smile at his good luck, as the Conservatives fought “a Basil Fawlty election – don’t mention the economy”.

I DID NOT forestall the drive to ape Mr Blair’s “Clause 4 moment” – as in picking fights with right-wing tax cutters to prove left-wing caring credentials.

I DID NOT foresee that some would say they prefer a big state, arguing that a small state cannot effectively fight crime and immigration.

I DID NOT see that New Labour would prove an intellectual sphinx 10 years later, leaving Conservatives still baffled by The Case of the Man Who Stole our Clothes.

I DID NOT avoid the underestimation of public intelligence, as in the policy description ‘Lower Taxes’, when in fact taxes would be higher.

After failing in the ways described above, I intended to find a small island in the Outer Hebrides and go and live there for the rest of my days. But I wrote this pamphlet instead, at the end of which I humbly put forward some proposals. Now I wait. And dream of what should be.

CHAPTER TWO

WHAT IS

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY lost the 2005 election in 1790. That was the year Edmund Burke first advised Conservatives to concentrate on:

What is

not on:

What should be

Burke made pragmatism the hallmark of Conservatism. Absence of idealism became its invisible badge of honour. And aimlessness became the pinnacle of its morality. There would never be a romantic bone in a Conservative body.

215 years later, Conservatism has fallen into an electoral slump. At the 2005 election, the authentic voice of Tory pragmatism spoke through the medium of a Conservative press officer:

If you want philosophy, read Descartes.

He implied that the function of the Conservative Party is to make the trains run on time.

A visit to the House of Lords Library confirms the point. The Library's computer can search for every book in the English language, in every University Library in the country. Asked for a list of books on 'Conservatism and Romanticism' the answer was: no match found. Asked again, this time for 'Conservatism and Idealism', the answer came back again: no match found.

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Conservatives favour cold realism over utopian dreaming. You find in their thinking a note of caution, of pragmatism, sometimes of self-interest, that strikes coldly on the romantic mind.

This is because Conservatives reject the heroic view of history – that history is made by ‘The Man with a Mission’, or that ‘One man with an idea is worth a thousand armies’. Since their earliest days, Conservatives have always mistrusted grand theories, visions and blueprints.

So Conservatives through the ages don’t promise the earth. They are down-to-earth people with their feet on the ground, not their heads in the clouds. They see no Valhalla. No Jerusalem. They don’t have stars in their eyes gazing at the promised land at the end of the rainbow.

To the romantic mind of the Left there is much that is objectionable about the state of the world. It thinks that, by an act of will, man can make things better. Left wing romanticism leads to activism. It has a linear approach. It sees itself at a Point A – Misery, and wants to get to Point B – Happiness. It makes a plan to get there.

To the cynical mind of the Right, by contrast, it is not necessary for politics to have an end in sight because it is not planning on going anywhere in particular. Nor is it desirable, because it might raise up false public expectations of what can be achieved by ‘the art of the possible’.

Yet in war, business, politics, and all forms of competitive human activity, a clear sense of purpose is a prerequisite of victory.

As in war, where generals say you can only win if you fight for:

A noble object

And that:

The selection and retention of aim is the first principle of warfare.

Or in business, where leaders say:

WHAT IS

Every brand must have a consistent, strategic focus and a distinct reason for being.

Or in politics, where successful presidential candidates for the highest office always adopt the phrase:

I will use the power of the presidency to...

That was how Lloyd George won one iconic post-war election by demanding:

Homes fit for heroes

And Clement Attlee won another by declaring:

We won the war. Now let's win the peace.

Sometimes the Conservatives did the same. So it was that in Disraeli's 'One Nation' the 'historic function' of the Conservative Party became:

the elevation of the condition of the people.

That was why the young Winston Churchill condemned:

the maudlin whine of selfish riches

and pledged his life to end it.

The record seems to show that this winning principle – a clear sense of purpose – applies to the two great political shifts of our own generation. Conservatives began the first – Mrs Thatcher in 1979. And fell victim to the second – Mr Blair in 1997.

In 1979, Mrs Thatcher had an aim. She expressed it simply:

Britain can be great again.

To prove it, the Conservatives developed all the winning arguments of our time. They presented a wonderful 'ism': Conservatism. When everyone said that there was nothing that could be done with Britain, they disagreed.

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They were proud of Conservatism and what it could do. For example, they said that:

Caring that works costs cash

The Good Samaritan showed that first you need the money in order to do the good works. They said that:

A bigger cake means a bigger slice for everyone.

They said that:

A rising tide lifts all ships.

They said that lower tax was good – for moral reasons, because it meant more freedom and choice for individuals: and for economic reasons, because paradoxically lower tax rates meant higher tax revenues and more wealth creation.

Economics was the priority:

National solvency is not so much an objective as condition sine qua non for the attainment of any objectives.

A smaller state was required:

The idea that the Government ought to run everything, which forms the core of Socialism, means the bureaucratisation of society, with the civil service running everything. The Government is already far too big.

And Socialism was a dangerous menace:

The best reply to full-blooded Socialism is not milk and water Socialism, it is genuine Conservatism. We shall do what we have said we will do – set the people free.

They tried to set the new direction for the Conservative Party into the historical and philosophical traditions of British Conservatism.

Disraeli and Churchill would have been proud of the result:

WHAT IS

Conservatives are not egalitarians. We believe in levelling up, in enhancing opportunities, not in levelling down, which dries up the springs of enterprise and endeavour and ultimately means that there are fewer resources for helping the disadvantaged.

As Mrs Thatcher summed it up:

The facts of life do invariably turn out to be Tory.

And so began the 20 year intellectual hegemony of the Conservative Party; triumphantly crowned at the end of the Century when its old adversary made the historic announcement that Labour too would adopt Conservative economics.

But by 1997, Mr Blair also had an aim. He wanted the British people to have:

Social justice and economic competence

With that magic combination, he said, New Labour would overcome Old Labour's timeless reputation as:

caring but incompetent

He offered a government that would be:

caring and competent

With that, he asked,

Who needs the Tories?

So he took down Labour's 'Berlin Wall'. He embraced free-enterprise capitalism. He welcomed low tax. He respected hard work. He admired wealth-creation. And then went on to offer his beguiling synthesis of capitalism and socialism.

He said that:

The polarities of Left and Right of the 20th century would prove an aberration.

He favoured:

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activist Government, but highly disciplined.

He spoke of ‘prudent finance’ and ‘fiscal rules’. He said that the market economy was fundamental, but rejected right wing neo-liberals who said government should shrink, get out of the way and then all would be well. That assumed, he said, that markets are always more intelligent than governments.

With his ‘Third Way’, he relaunched ‘the middle of the road’ as something contemporary, exciting, idealistic. Something that combined competition with compassion, freedom with fairness, efficiency with equality – every schoolboy’s dream, and every voter’s dream, too.

Mrs Thatcher and Mr Blair became history-makers because they understood that dreams are important. They knew that in politics, as in law, motive is all. People give credit to someone whose heart is in the right place. So,

The premise of this pamphlet is:

If you stand for something, you will have people for you and people against you. But if you stand for nothing you will have nobody for you and nobody against you.

The message of this pamphlet is:

For the Conservative Party in the 21st century there should be no shame in an aim; no ban on a plan. On the contrary, a clear sense of purpose, a certain idealism, a marching tune people can respond to, is, as it once was for Disraeli, Churchill and Thatcher, the essential precondition for Conservative success – the only way to make this the next Conservative century.

The aim of this pamphlet is to:

Rescue Conservatism from its sceptical and pessimistic outlook – to allow the romantic to feel at home in company which might otherwise seem too hard-headed for his taste.

The conclusion of this pamphlet is that:

WHAT IS

A successful political movement must always meet four simple requirements:

1 A noble purpose

There was nothing complicated about:

Liberté. Egalité. Fraternité

2 A fight against injustice

Nobody needed further elucidation when they heard:

No taxation without representation.

3 A sense of direction.

When they said,

Go west, young man...

They did, in their millions.

4 A destination.

One man said:

I have a dream...

and made it come true.

All expressed in an iconic policy to symbolise these four qualities.

Edmund Burke told Conservatives to concentrate on:

What is

not on:

What should be

This pamphlet says the exact opposite.

CHAPTER THREE

LABOUR IDEALISM

FRIEDRICH VON HAYEK, the architect of neo-liberalism, reminded us of the power of dreams when he said:

The main lesson that the true liberal must learn from the socialist is that it is their courage to be utopian that gained them the support of the intellectuals, and thereby an influence on public opinion.

The Working Men's Association was created in St Martin's Hall in London on 28 September 1864 and its rules were adopted in the last week in October of the same year by a group of around 20 long-forgotten men and women. But this scattered collection of individuals altered history.

The provisional rules of their first international meeting were published in November 1864, and ran as follows:

The economical emancipation of the working classes is therefore the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means.

The First Socialist International and the Marxist doctrines so strongly represented in its preamble, statutes and rules, impressed themselves on men's imagination and, according to Isaiah Berlin:

achieved a concrete influence greater than all the other organised social movements of the time, perhaps greater than occurred since the rise of Christianity against paganism.

With his friend, Engels, Karl Marx had been brought into the movement by the British working class leaders and, after years of

LABOUR IDEALISM

obscurity, finally became a dominating figure on the public stage of European and world history.

The philosophical root of Marxism is the concept of history as a scientific process. There is a march of history, a historic inevitability, which it is senseless to criticise and against which we fight to our certain doom. In Marx's writing, only the brightest and most gifted are ever aware of these deeper forces of change. These are Marx's:

world-historical figures

towering over, and contemptuous of, their puny contemporaries. These omniscient beings, as they contemplate the discomfiture and destruction of the philistines, believe they have seen some crucial insight into the nature of the universe. Professor Popper described them:

Whatever is on the side of change is just and wise; whatever is on the other side, on the side of the world that is doomed to destruction by the working of the forces of history, is foolish, ignorant, retrograde, wicked.

For working class leaders and their companions in the 1860s, as for Mr Blair a century later,

the forces of conservatism

were a feeble symbol of a creed no longer relevant to the new realities of their blueprint for a new order. They believed that their own brand of change was the latest and boldest achievement of the human mind, an achievement so staggeringly novel that only a few people were sufficiently advanced to grasp it.

They felt a call to change human affairs, refusing to accept the existing state of things. They suspected anyone who did not share their attitude towards change as a daring and revolutionary challenge to traditional thought. They were attracted by Karl Marx's famous exhortation to activism:

Philosophers have only interpreted the world; the point however is to change it.

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Marx provided the angry, the miserable, the poor, the discontented with a specific enemy – the capitalist exploiter, the bourgeoisie. He proclaimed a Holy War which gave the poor and the exploited not only hope, but something specific to do:

Organisation for ruthless war: with the prospect of blood, sweat and tears, of battles, death and perhaps temporary defeats; but, above all, the guarantee of a happy ending to the story.

CHAPTER FOUR

TORY PRAGMATISM

HOW DIFFERENT WERE THE THOUGHTS in the mind of Michael Oakeshott when he gave the inaugural address on assuming the Professorship of Political Science at the London School of Economics.

He offered no ‘happy ending’, no political system, no doctrine, no grand philosophy. Like Conservatives before and after him Oakeshott was cynical of propositions derived from a presumed knowledge of ‘truth’. His basic affirmation was that nothing can be said with finality. He declared that:

Empirical politics are the product of a misunderstanding.

He insisted that politics:

could not be the result of intellectual premeditation.

And he elegantly dismissed:

the illusion that in politics there is a destination to be reached

in this famous sentence:

In political activity, men sail a boundless and bottomless sea. There is neither harbour for shelter, nor floor for anchorage; neither starting-place nor appointed destination. The enterprise is to keep afloat on an even keel.

No instruments are required on Professor Oakeshott’s boat because for Conservatives from Burke to Oakeshott there is no *idée fixe*: Politics is not goal-oriented, not ‘directed towards’ something.

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Since its earliest days the Conservative Party seems always to have mistrusted theories or blueprints. For Conservatives, reason is a vice, un-reason is a virtue. There are no Points A and B. There are no means and ends because there are no ends.

Conservatives insist on the pejorative use of the term ‘ideology’ to equate ideological thought with ‘dogma’, and contrast it with ‘common sense’ or ‘empirical wisdom’. They dismiss ‘abstract debate’ as a factor in Conservative politics.

Burke took political philosophy to a new level of hard-headed practical realism. One of the central themes in the *Reflections on the French Revolution* is the need for Government to be consistent with man’s nature – to recognise that Government exists to restrain the defects in man’s make-up.

For example, of the poor he said:

When they rise to destroy the rich, they act as wisely for their own purposes, as when they burn mills, and throw corn into the river, to make bread cheap.

It is easy to see why some people say that Burke laid the foundations for the Tory reputation for hard-heartedness. His indifference to the economic plight of the masses was matched only by his indifference to their political sentiments.

Of Rousseau’s ‘General Will’, the will of the people, he wrote:

Some decent regulated pre-eminence, some preference given to birth, is neither unnatural, nor unjust, nor impolitic. It is said that 24 million ought to prevail over 200,000. To men who may reason calmly, it is ridiculous.

The area of Burke’s thought that has drawn most criticism is his belief that the state ought not to interfere in social and economic life.

For Burke, the state was primarily concerned with the minimal task of protecting religion, securing the person and property of its members, and generally resolving the few issues which remained outside the self-regulating mechanism of the social order.

TORY PRAGMATISM

Burke's thinking resonates through Conservative history. The Duke of Wellington expressed it:

Reform! Reform! Aren't things bad enough already?

Consider this definition of Conservatism in a speech made at Edinburgh in December 1875, by the 15th Earl of Derby, then Foreign Secretary in Disraeli's Government:

To distrust loud professions and large promises; to place no confidence in theories for the regeneration of mankind, however brilliant and ingenious; to believe only in that improvement which is steady and gradual, and accomplished step by step; not to compare our actual condition with the ideal world which thinkers may have sketched.

Or this in 1885 by the Duke of Cambridge, Queen Victoria's Uncle, and the Commander of all the British Armed Forces:

It is said that I am against change. I am not against change. I am in favour of change, when it is necessary. And it is necessary when it is unavoidable.

Or, as Quentin Hogg put it in the 1950s:

Conservatives offer no utopia at all but something quite modestly better than the present. Of catchwords, slogans, visions, ideal states of society, new orders... All the great evils of our time have come from men pretending that good government could offer utopia. Conservatives would rather die than sell such trash.

The Conservative pragmatic tradition maintains a certain reserve. It insists that society moves more slowly than some would want, that ideas be long tested, and only gradually absorbed. It contends that some degree of solidity and inertia is a mark of moral poise, to which society owes its cohesiveness and stability.

But now, 200 years after Burke, that philosophy has begun to wear thin.

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In Sophocles' play, *Oedipus Rex*, Oedipus arrives at Thebes when the city is ravaged by the sphinx, which has settled on a cliff overlooking the city, posing riddles to all who attempt to pass and destroying anyone who gives an incorrect answer.

For the Conservative Party, 'New Labour' has proved an intellectual sphinx. Its riddles have left the Conservative Party flat-footed for more than a decade. The pragmatic focus on daily practicalities has provided no answer to Mr Blair's basic question,

Who needs the Tories?

Conservatives have been painfully slow to accept that theirs is the generation of Conservatives whose misfortune it is to coincide with the conversion of their chief opponent from a Marxist/socialist party to a modern social democratic party.

The problem was best described by Sir John Major:

You go for a swim in the sea. When you come back a man has taken your clothes. He has put them on. He looks like you. When he talks, he sounds like you. He has taken your identity. But if he is you, who are we?

Failure to answer this question of identity is the main criticism to be placed at the door of the post-Thatcher generation of Conservative politicians.

The pragmatic answer – to find out what people say they want and give it to them – has been tried, and failed.

Tory pragmatism killed Tory idealism. The victim is the modern Conservative Party.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHAT SHOULD BE

IN HOLLYWOOD, they say, ‘nobody knows anything’. But studio bosses know one thing. They can tell in advance the gross box office takings of a film in its first weekend of national distribution in America by the answer to one simple question:

How likely will you be to recommend this film to a friend?

They call this ‘word of mouth’. Word of mouth can open a film as a hit, or close it. In politics, too, word of mouth rules, and at the last election it ruled against the Conservatives.

Apparently, when one person says to their friend:

You should see this film.

The friend always asks the same two questions:

Who’s in it?

and:

What’s it about?

For the Conservative Party, the answer to:

Who’s in it?

will be provided by the leadership election (see the test in the Appendix). But the answer to the second question:

What’s it about?

has remained elusive for a decade, costing three elections in a row.

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So it is, that by the time Conservatives settle down for their Christmas lunch, the party will have had five leaders in eight years.

This arises from the mistaken premise that the public, being moronic, can only appreciate a message if it is delivered by Tom Cruise or Brad Pitt. Whereas the reality is that elections are an intellectual battle and the winner is the one with the best arguments, not the prettiest face.

Of course, it would be marvellous to have Brad Pitt as Leader of the Conservative Party. But if his script consisted of clichés and platitudes he would never become Prime Minister. Nor would he by taking dictation from focus groups. The simple test in the Appendix would betray him.

So to have a life expectancy of more than eighteen months, the next leader of the party will have to attempt something akin to Baron Munchausen's feat in extricating himself from a swamp by pulling on his whiskers. He or she will want an answer to:

What's it about?

that satisfies the requirements of the mind and the demands of the heart; that marries electoral efficacy and moral legitimacy.

Why is a sense of moral purpose so important? Bertrand Russell explained:

Real life is to most men a long second-best, a perpetual compromise between the ideal and the possible.

What makes human beings special is that they possess the powers of imagination and can raise up in their mind a vision of a better world and a better life.

It follows that lofty thoughts and nobler impulses touch the work-a-day lives of everyone. They are an escape from the dreary exile of the actual world.

There is, then, a specific value of belief in goodness. Man is not called upon just to act, but to act justly.

WHAT SHOULD BE

A true and complete philosophy serves as a dynamic to human endeavour. The larger the enterprise, the greater the need for a fixed orientation.

There are some beliefs which, like the keystone of the arch or the base of the pyramid, cannot be dislodged without overthrowing the whole structure.

So while we can admire such well-known Conservative characteristics as the love of the concrete in preference to the abstract, and intolerance of mere book-learning etc. we can still see why it is such an error to think of Conservatism as in the main merely a belief in ‘practicality’ and ‘efficiency’. True Conservatism is practical idealism, and its aims, instead of being merely materialistic and mechanical, are idealistic to the point of being Utopian.

With that in mind, can we answer the question?

What's it about?

Despite Conservative protestations of ideological innocence, all Conservatives do have one deep belief – in a free and independent individual. It is there in the beating heart of every true Conservative. Like gravity, you don't have to invent it. You only have to discover it. And then express it.

The guiding thread of Conservatism is the centrality and the importance of the human person, the need for humankind to be responsible and master of its destiny – the idea that men and women have the power, given the right social circumstances, to be masters of their social world, to take control of the social structures in which they exist.

For Conservatives, to be human is to be grown-up.

Conservatism asserts that the goal for each person is the fullest development of all of their latent powers and abilities, their human potential. Ironically, it was Karl Marx who described the concept best, when he spoke of each person being a hunter in the morning, a fisherman in the afternoon, a cattle rearer in the evening, and a critic after dinner.

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Marx's achievement was to claim such 'human dignity' for the Left. My aim is to recapture those words for Conservatism. And, by doing so, to allow the romantic to feel at home in company which might otherwise seem too hard-headed for his taste.

It follows that Conservatives would wish to ensure that each person had the resources to achieve this. But whenever today's Conservative Party tries to define itself in these moral terms, it comes up against a major obstacle – that economics has become a danger zone for the modern Conservative Party. Ever since New Labour put on Tory economic clothes, Conservatives have been in a blue funk about economics, leading to fear and/or silence on the subject. We have lost our moral and electoral bearings in the fog.

Conservatives who prefer cold calculation to moral philosophy will note the electoral record. It seems to show that in the last seven General Elections the party that leads on 'managing the economy' is the party that wins.

In its four consecutive election victories, from 1979 to 1992, the Conservative Party had a 20 point lead on this issue. In its three consecutive election defeats that followed, Labour had a 20 point lead. Party ratings on other issues did not affect the outcome.

Yet, incredibly, some Conservatives said it was best to shut up about the subject.

First, they said, to speak of money at all suggests you are greedy, nasty, and only out for your rich friends. It confirms a cruel and heartless reputation. Therefore, they said, silence.

Second, they said, we live in an age of 'post materialism'. People have all the money they need. They now want other things in life. They call this 'the Blair Settlement', and conclude that economics is:

A second order issue

Therefore, they said, silence.

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Third, they said, to Mr Blair's amusement, economics was now an area of Labour strength and Conservative weakness. Therefore, they said, silence.

And finally, they said, if a focus on economics means lower tax, and if lower tax means a smaller state, that is no good, because we need a big state to fight crime and immigration. Therefore, silence.

These are the arguments that have held the Conservative party in its wilderness years.

In three elections in a row, Conservatives tried to defend themselves on economics by saying they would only cut tax by cutting spending on bad things, like 'government bureaucracy and waste'. But Labour did not oblige by saying:

Oh look! The Conservatives are only going to cut wasteful spending. So not to worry.

Labour leaders ignored that. They said, with apparent logic, that one pound less tax means one pound less spending, which means one less nurse and one less school and one less hospital. For the Conservatives, that was it. Stalemate.

Perhaps, there might be more chance of progress along another dimension altogether – goodness; the Good State versus the Bad State.

The noble purpose of the Good State is to pursue the happiness of its people, by preserving the liberty of its citizens.

Its guiding principle is rooted in economics, as in J. K. Galbraith's observation:

The greatest restriction on the liberty of the citizen is a complete absence of money.

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The Good State sees that human dignity (a phrase long since appropriated by the Left) in fact resides in independence, individuality, self-determination.

As Aristotle says, a man should live as he likes:

This is the privilege of a free man, since, on the other hand, not to live as a man likes, is the mark of a slave.

Like Locke, Rousseau, Jefferson and all the great champions of liberal democracy, the great aim of the Good State is that free men and women are able to say:

I am the captain of my soul.

The Good State meets the claim of men 'to be ruled by none, if possible'. Or, if this is impossible, to be as independent as they can reasonably be.

The Good State recognises that a paternalist government, based on the benevolence of a ruler who treats his subjects as dependent children is the greatest conceivable despotism and destroys all freedom. This is the Bad State.

Let us consider the Bad State. We must do that because we are all bound to a life-long struggle against what appears as evil. This law of struggle for the good constitutes the chief value of life in this world. As Plotinus says:

Our striving is after good, and our turning away is from evil: and purposive thought is of good and evil, and this is good.

The proof of this is the Ten Commandments. Nine of these moral rules are negative. 'Thou shalt not do so and so'. Only the fifth commandment, 'Honour thy father and thy mother', is positive. So, undoubtedly moral goodness implies a turning away from evil as well as a striving after good.

Therefore, it is legitimate to say thou shalt not live in the Bad State. It is bad because it deliberately makes as many people as possible dependent on it. That is why in its latest incarnation as the present Labour Government, the Bad State has employed

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nearly a million more citizens directly on its payroll. In Britain today, it now employs 7 million people, 28% of the working population. Meanwhile, the Bad State has also nearly doubled the percentage of households in receipt of state benefits, up from 24% to 40%. So now, the majority of people in Britain are financially beholden to the Bad State. Itself the master. The tax/benefit system the chief instrument of its power.

They say a picture tells a thousand words.

Picture the cheque received by millions of voters from the Bad State a week before the last election. In one Conservative target seat (not won), voters described it to the Conservative candidate in stark terms:

We will not be voting for the Conservatives because we like the benefits from Labour, and you'll probably take them away, and turkeys don't vote for Christmas.

That is dependence on the Bad State for money.

Now picture the queue at Scarborough for a dentist.

That is dependence on the Bad State for medical treatment.

Queueing for healthcare. And queueing for money. Whatever queue you are in, the Bad State is in charge, you are dependent on it and you wait in line.

The Bad State does not treat people as grown-ups. It offers not human dignity, but inhuman indignity.

People may not like this level of dependence. They may hate it. But what alternative do they have? Certainly not the Conservative Party, which, in its recent history, has neither painted a picture of a more independent future, nor appeared protective of the benefits people depend on now.

So here we are, in Baron Munchausen's swamp.

All because nobody could think of an economic policy to be proud of, instead of defensive about; an economic programme to feel good about, and strive for, instead of apologise for.

IF THIS IS CONSERVATISM, I AM A CONSERVATIVE

The hand of the Good State reaches out to help. Can the Conservative Party, collectively, as a body, grasp it and escape?

I hope so. Because an economic problem calls for an economic solution. Conservatives have to stop running away from economics. Conservatives should remember, and take pride in the fact, that Conservative belief is inextricably, inseparably, and rightly connected to economics. Why? Because, in the real world, as Professor Galbraith explained, personal independence (of the kind admired by all good men) and economic independence are inextricably linked.

All the great Tory thinkers understood this. Theirs was a just cause, a noble purpose, anchored in economics.

So, when Labour says:

Tories will take your tax credits

there is only one answer:

Tories say you won't pay tax in the first place.

It should be stressed that this is not a 'tax cut'. In the era of stealth taxes that is far too complicated a concept. People just believe that what is given with one hand will be taken with another. The only plausible counter to that justifiable cynicism is to take certain people out of paying income tax altogether. Who are these blessed people? The people who deserve it, of course.

So when Labour says:

The Conservative Party is for the rich

what could be a more exciting reply than to release the six million people who live below the official poverty line from paying income tax altogether. Why? Because they need it. It will end the injustice of a cap-in-hand life.

When Labour says:

The Conservative Party is uncaring

WHAT SHOULD BE

what could be a more inspiring answer than to take the twelve million pensioners out of paying income tax altogether. Why? Because they've earned it. They've paid their dues. It will end the injustice of elderly people going on paying income tax until they drop down dead.

When Labour says:

The Conservative Party is not for the young

what could be a more uplifting response than to offer young people what they want – to shake off dependence on parents and lead their own version of the good life. What does a young man or woman want more than anything else? Independence. What do they crave? Individuality. What do they demand? Self-determination.

Isn't that what every good parent wants for their children? Independence. Individuality. Self-determination. That is what the Good State wants for its citizens. And remember, only the Conservative Party believes in the Good State.

In his last speech before his historic third election victory, Mr Blair attacked Conservative morality for its:

narrow, selfish individualism

Perhaps he forgot that the last person to attack his opponents with those words was Chairman Mao.

CHAPTER SIX

WHAT NOW

AT THIS POINT, the reader will say, ‘Such fine principles. How very idealistic,’ and will ask ‘What are you going to do about it?’

It is true that the test of belief is willingness to act; the readiness to act in a cause the happy result of which is not certified to us in advance.

So I intend to introduce a series of Private Members’ Bills in the House of Lords, some of which are described below. They will appear in the Autumn. They will give policy expression to belief. Perhaps they will be seen as useful examples of how the Good State could be advanced.

For, as Aristotle says, a good man may exist, and may have a good character, even when he is fast asleep; and yet if there were nothing in the Universe but good men, with good characters, all fast asleep, there would be nothing in it which was ‘good’ in the fundamental sense with which this pamphlet is concerned.

A BILL to abolish stealth tax, by providing a simple, transparent measure of the true levels of tax being paid.

A BILL to end the tax injustice of people living below the Government’s official poverty line paying tax.

A BILL to stop the tax iniquity of pensioners paying income tax until they drop down dead.

A BILL to increase the individual citizen’s power over Parliament.

A BILL to increase individual MPs’ power over Government.

WHAT NOW

It is for the new Conservative leader to determine whether any of these will help make the dream of the Good State come true.

When Diogenes spoke, they said:

How well he speaks

But when Demosthenes spoke, they said:

Let us march!

Step forward, Demosthenes. Your hour is come.

A noble purpose.

A fight against injustice.

A sense of direction.

A destination.

If this is Conservatism, I am a Conservative.

If it isn't, God help us all.

APPENDIX

A CUT-OUT-AND-KEEP GUIDE TO THE CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP ELECTION



Does the next Conservative leader deserve your support?

Just apply this simple eye test. Ask the candidate to describe:

A noble purpose

A fight against injustice

A sense of direction

A destination

Then look into his or her eyes. You will immediately see if the candidate means it, or has just been handed the answers in a focus group report.

Ensure that the answers are extremely simple. Simplicity is the outcome of technical subtlety. It is the goal, not the starting point. To provide a precis is a mark of respect for the listener, a modern form of good manners.

The test is infallible. Its action is that of the threshing machine. It sorts the intellectual wheat from the chaff. It forces exactitude or it annihilates. It will accelerate failure when a cause is weak, and clarify and strengthen a cause that is strong.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE GOLDEN LEGACY? £5.00

Ruth Lea

These are fantastically good figures”, the official concluded. “The state of the economy is much better than predicted.” Eyes swivelled to Brown. “What am I supposed to do with this?” he snarled. “Write a thank-you letter?”

Ruth Lea shows that, despite Gordon Brown’s claims to the contrary, the Labour Government was fortunate to inherit a “Golden Legacy” from the Major Government in 1997. In addition, the current Government’s policies have hindered rather than helped business and have undermined competitiveness with the result that, today, the economy is not performing as well as it did under the Major Government.

*Mr Brown, in glorifying his own record, takes no account of what the Centre for Policy Studies has described as his golden economic inheritance – leading article in *The Sunday Times**



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The Centre for Policy Studies was founded by Sir Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher in 1974 and is one of Britain's best-known and most respected centre-right policy research centres. Its Chairman is Lord Blackwell, a former Head of the Prime Minister's Policy Unit with extensive business experience. Its Director is Ruth Lea, whose career spans the civil service, the City, and the media (ITN). She was also the Head of the Policy Unit at the Institute of Directors.

The CPS is the champion of the small state. It believes people should be enabled and encouraged to live free and responsible lives. It tirelessly promotes Britain as an independent and democratic country. This is an exciting agenda for the 21st century – and the right agenda for the 21st century.

The role of the Centre for Policy Studies is twofold. First, it is to develop a coherent, yet practical, alternative set of policies that roll back the state, reform public services, support families and challenge the threats to Britain's independence. Policies are one thing but the CPS is committed to producing policies that can be put into action.

Second, it is to create the environment in which these policies can be adopted by government. The CPS seeks to influence and persuade government, politicians, the media and other opinion-formers that these policies would, if enacted, significantly change and improve people's lives.

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