



10 DOWNING STREET

Notes from David Hart

Jessa

12/9/83



ESCAPING THE TYRANNY OF THE MAJORITY.

We tell the common people that if they submit to a code of tyrannical regulations, they shall never be in want. They do submit to these regulations. They perform their part of the contract, but we do not, nay cannot perform ours and thus the poor sacrifice the valuable blessings of liberty and receive nothing that can be called an equivalent in return. (T. Malthus.)

Except in time of war, the highest principle of public policy must be the enhancement of all aspects of individual freedom.

It is only by encouraging the widest possible diversity of vision, talent, aptitude and art that society can meet the challenges to its survival.

You begin your second government with a real chance to return freedom and responsibility to the individual. Your political authority is higher than ever. Use it to reverse the long decline towards what J. S. Mill called the tyranny of the majority.

Clearly, the greatest enemy to personal freedom is the State. You have managed to halt the trend to increase, itself a remarkable achievement, now, you must reverse it.

It is not going to be easy.

The only instruments apparently available to you are organs of the State. State employees, the predominant vested interest in society today, naturally resist any decline in their numbers and importance.

Leaks are skillfully released, the poverty lobby is galvanised, wet Tories have their ears bent with stories of appalling hardship, all of them exceptions to the rules of normal life in Britain, (see the Sunday Times recent, disgraceful nonsense on poverty in Hackney) the more gullible backbenchers are led to believe that social unrest is the inevitable consequence of asking people to look after themselves.

Fortunately, there is another, most potent, instrument available to you. The national debate. The word is not only swifter than the sword, it can be surer.



Generate a national debate to re-examine all the conventional assumptions on welfare and the role of the State.

The street, never able to afford too many illusions, understands what must be done, expects you to articulate it, knows that you are the only political leader during the last thirty years who has had the courage to face and tell the truth.

Those who will oppose you are the comfortable ones, those with a shallow desire to hang on to that which they have, those who are ready to yield the outer reaches of their territories, spiritual and material, for a quiet life. Such people will not bear examination beneath the torch of a rigorous national debate.

Your most singular achievement is to have brought the street so far, that it knows, in its bones, that radical change is the only solution.

The essential propositions that should be ventilated in such a debate are not economic but moral.

By providing a high degree of welfare the State confiscates responsibility from the individual for the management of his own affairs.

A society that offers its citizens the freedom to succeed also, perforce, permits them the freedom to fail.

Why should most people not pay for misfortune out of income (insurance) as they do for their luxuries, holidays etc?

There will always be some who suffer misfortunes for which they cannot provide. They should be helped by relatives, friends, voluntary groups, and, as a last resort, of course, by the State.

The fundamental mistake is to look to compulsion to do the work of freedom. The State, the engine of compulsion, cannot create what can only be created by individuals acting on one another.

If government stops providing a service it does not mean that the service will disappear. If there is a real demand for it, in a free society, someone will supply it.

As society becomes more prosperous, expectations increase. That which was considered a luxury twenty years ago is now considered a necessity.



The debate can best be generated by asking each minister to oversee a fundamental review of the role of the State in his area of responsibility and report to cabinet within six months. The review should ask:

In the case of, (i) the provision and administration of welfare and services, (ii) the ownership and administration of State industries, and (iii) the creation and maintenance of regulations that have statutory force . . .

Is the function or regulation essential?

If it is, can it be undertaken by the private sector?

If not, is it being administered efficiently and in a way most likely to have a benign effect on society as a whole rather than on those who are administering it?

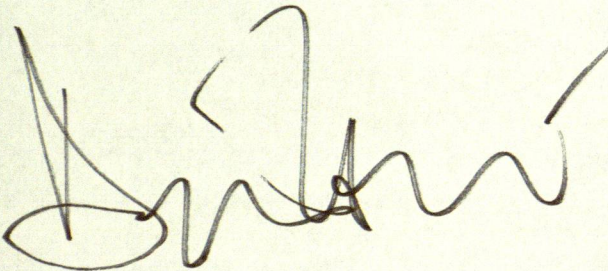
The review itself should be undertaken by private enterprise. Each Minister should form a small committee of civil servants and outsiders, in equal proportion, to formulate instructions and terms of reference for private enterprise organisations to undertake the work. In order to ensure a rigorous examination, particularly on questions of functions, his committee should not be made up entirely of members of the Establishment. The odd maverick would be beneficial!

As each Ministry is examined, as much of the report as is compatible with national security must be published without delay.

The war against the tyranny of the State is as important to our national survival as the war against Hitler. By taking ordinary people into your confidence, you will create the army that you need to come, at last, to victory.

8th September 1983.

David Hart.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'David Hart', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.