



Where the Conservative Party Should go next

By Matthew Page

About the Author

Matthew Page is Chairman of Consult which advocates the role of younger people in politics, and engages potential new voters by stressing issues and policy rather than political process. Matthew is externally focused in looking at new opportunities for Consult as well as how the think-tank engages with different groups, agendas and campaigns. Matthew also line manages the direct reports of Consult as well as overseeing the planning of all of its activity.

About Consult

Consult encourages young people to think for and beyond the cause of the Conservative Party, and represents the growing niche of people who want to talk about policy away from the emphasis of politics.

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Time for the Conservative Party to challenge Equality and champion the Classless Society

Chief to the Conservative Party's Recovery will be its return to representing a Vision and not an Issue Party, argues Matthew Page, Chairman Consult

A lot of questions have been asked and some resolved when considering the future of the Conservative Party over recent weeks:

- Should we change our name?
- Should we championing the centre ground or the common ground?
- Should we be more left-wing than right-wing?
- How should we elect a new leader?
- And, of course, who should be the next leader?

Whilst all of these issues are important, these only start to scratch the surface of where the Conservative Party both has and needs to go if it is to win the next election. Structural changes like the above, as well as better management of voluntary members and advocating the role of younger people in policy development are also important, but it is the hearts and minds of ordinary voters that the Party needs to win and which must take precedence as the Party's future strategy begins to take shape.

In brief, the Party must demonstrate that it can not only set out an exciting vision of where it can take the country, but that this is both socially responsible and also can be practically implemented. In reaching far and wide the Party must ensure that its feet are welded in both reality and common sense. This is a difficult balance to strike, but one that can be achieved when considering the current opportunity which presents itself in the current vacuum of British Politics.

Challenging Equality

It is the notion of Equality, what it stands for and how we can make it better where there lies the most fruit for the Conservative party to explore. Labour claims to hold automatic right to the arguments and case for Equality, but when one examines what has actually been both achieved and implemented then one understands the true nature of the current problem.

Firstly, arguing that everyone needs the same of everything is not an argument befitting of the 21st century. In an age where global communications, global business and modern technology drive through a diverse range of opportunities, do we really need a government which tells us where we should be going, what we should be doing and what we can aspire to achieve? The two are incompatible, and since one is practical reality and one is political ideology, it is easy to discern where the fault lies.

But most importantly the argument that everyone requires more of the same of everything fails to deliver for those who most require support, namely the poorest communities and sections of society. Live in a poor community under Labour and you will be compelled to send your child to a poor school Live in a poor community under Labour and you will have poorer access to good healthcare. Live in a poor community under Labour and you are likely to be stuck in a rut, trapped and unable to get out, and paying higher taxes for the privilege of this.

The opportunity and the right argument for the Conservatives to put forward is that different people require different opportunities, and therefore the poorest and most vulnerable communities require the most radical solutions if they are to have anything like the opportunities enjoyed by the more affluent sections of society.

Live in a poor community and you desire the passport of a good education that will enable you or your children to move away from the shackles of poverty. Live in a poor community and you desire the healthcare or treatment to the condition that has been holding you back. Live in a poor community and you wish for the same opportunities regarding University Education, Pension Provision, Transport and other key policy areas which seem beyond you and directed at another world.

Moral Cause

But arguing that different people require different solutions rather than everyone needing the same of everything is not only purposeful but morally right. As well as arguing for a bottom up form of society where everyone can gain the opportunities that only money can buy, it is also important to emphasise the importance of the individual and the fact that the very best values of compassion, empathy and understanding come from within us and therefore need to be nurtured and not instructed.

Autonomy is the highest individual value which can be applied and it is natural that we all want to not only make decisions for ourselves but also better ourselves at every opportunity. But coupled to a natural caring for our fellow man and when applying the above values of support as naturally coming from within us, then you see an argument for both a purposeful and caring society really beginning to take shape.

In brief, when people are able to think purposefully for themselves and compassionately about others that you have the building blocks for better society and one that is more in tune with the movement of the current 21st Century.

The Future of our Own Country

Putting across the argument that different people require different things, as well as the argument that the poorest and most vulnerable in society require more radical solutions to enjoy the same opportunities as everyone else, is a vision fitting for a 21st Century Conservative party.

It contains both direction in championing the needs of those who most require support, argues that the best values come from within us as well as our individual duty to care for each other, and is about giving opportunity to those who most require it. It

is about making use of the resources of global communication, business and modern technology to create more opportunity and aspiration, this is about promoting true equality in individuals being able to be judged not by who they are but what they do.

So it is time for the Conservative Party to be bold and radical. Time for people to be judged not by who they are but by what they bring to the table. Time for the underdog to be supported in looking for new radical ground away from the shackles of poverty. Time to champion the classless society that advocates more radical solutions for those who most need them they can have the same opportunities as everyone else.

The Classless Society, where everyone can have the opportunities they crave and are judged on their true worth and not by their class, is an argument for both equality and true progression in line with the values of the 21st Century. Explaining this vision, its moral purpose in emphasising the very best human values of autonomy and caring for others, as well as the need for the underdog and the less fortunate to be progressed, is a starting point for arguing the case for the classless society and the Conservative Party's ambition to capture the hearts and minds of the voters prior to the 2009/2010 General Election.

Matthew Page, September 2005