



BRIAN MONTEITH

SHOCK JOCK

## The Freedom Association begets a son!

I FIRST became aware of The Freedom Association back in the late seventies during the time of the Grunwick dispute. Fighting against trade union coercion, violent bullying and, in particular, fighting the tyranny of the “closed shop”, was one of TFA’s successful campaigns.

As a young student I avidly read *Freedom Today* in its old newspaper format and found help and inspiration from people such as Gerald Hartup, Philip van der Elst, and of course, Norris McWhirter.

Ever since then, while some campaign groups have come and gone, The Freedom Association has been a resolute defender of individual liberty. (It’s a great pity we no longer have an Aims of Industry championing free enterprise in a way that the CBI and IOD are patently unable to).

The political scene is now quite different - but no less threatening to the individual. Gone is the Soviet Union and the obvious peril it presented, but while the liberal economic order continues to spread, bringing prosperity to socialist democracies such as India and communist states such as China, those that still seek to control our lives have moved into other spheres of debate such as the environment and our lifestyles.

While TFA continues to fight the battles in Britain based on property rights, the rule of law and the individual’s liberty in a parliamentary democracy (and thus, correctly, identifies the European Union as the greatest threat to all three) there is a need to respond to these new challenges - and we cannot and should not expect The Freedom Association to be able to do this too.

If TFA campaigns were to lose focus by fighting too many battles they would be diluted and weakened, with the prospect of being less effective.

That is why there is always room for more campaign groups that are able to take up the cause of individual liberty with a differ-

ent perspective - and that’s why I welcome the foundation of the new internet-based campaign at [www.thefreesociety.org](http://www.thefreesociety.org) - home of The Free Society.

Established by Simon Clark, a former editor of *Freedom Today*, The Free Society fills a void that was so obvious one wonders why it was never attempted before. Dealing essentially with the new threat to the way we choose to live our lives, the web site pulls together the work of groups such as Safe Speed, the TaxPayers’ Alliance, FOREST, the Country-side Alliance and NO2ID and provides a daily source of news, factual information and comment.

It uses political activists, academics and celebrities from the world of music, broadcasting and the arts to offer daily articles on particular aspects of our lives that do-gooders, collectivists and public health fascists seek to restrict through the authority of the modern technological state.

Camera surveillance, identity cards, taxes on meat, salt and fat, higher taxes and greater restrictions on alcohol, licenses to smoke, the freedom to fish, shoot or drive - these issues and many more are how the new collectivists are trying to bully us into behaving, just as we would have if the old Soviets had won (only there would only be cabbages on the shelves and we would all be driving Wartburgs if we could only get the petrol).

I use the word “bully” intentionally, for the nanny state is no more, it is now the bully state that has muscled its way into our lives, for as the first wave of restrictions have been introduced by nanny and their effect has worn off or they have been ignored or circumvented, so nanny has been put out to grass as the campaigners seek more coercive powers to threaten us with so we live up to their utopian standards.

Well, as the Prisoner said in the prophetic television series of the sixties, “I will not be pushed, filed, stamped, indexed, briefed,

debriefed, or numbered. I am not a number, I am a free man!” May I paraphrase to add “Nor shall I be pasteurised, homogenised, certified, monitored, coerced, licensed or categorised. I am not a category, I am a free man.”

TFA Members will recognize many familiar faces on the web site with contributions from Madsen Pirie, Christopher Booker, Richard North and *Freedom Today’s* current editor, Simon Richards, as well as yours truly. Like TFA, the Free Society recognizes that there is good and bad in all parties, giving space to people of all shades of the political spectrum so long as they identify that political intervention to correct a problem (often helped by junk science and manipulated statistics) cannot justify the removal of personal freedoms that have no impact on innocent third parties.

Crucially the Free Society argues that even if one does not approve of a particular pastime - such as smoking or foxhunting - one should defend it, for it is through the isolation of individual pursuits and then the control of them that the state is able, incrementally, to become the leviathan controlling us all. In short, once the state has taken someone else’s freedom that you did not care about, the control freaks egging the politicians on will, together, eventually get round to limiting your freedoms too.

It may be something as simple as forcing motorcyclists to put their headlights on to “reduce deaths on British roads”, or taxing more heavily the vast majority of moderate imbibers to “prevent the drunken carnage on Britain’s streets” - whatever the level of intervention, it justifies the next, whilst never acknowledging that it is the personal responsibilities of individuals that need to be challenged and held to account, not the behaviour of groups of people.

TFA has, in a sense, begat a son. The next generation of freedom fighters has arrived.

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