

IS OUR LIBERTY LOST?

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As domestic political attention turns to the local elections on May 5, the scene could hardly be more bitter what with the deteriorating Ukraine situation abroad and the worsening economic situation at home. While we delight at once again being permitted to carry out our civic duty as responsible citizens of a notional democracy, thoughts turn to the freedom-loving options on offer to the electorate and why libertarianism in Britain leaves much to be desired.

Traditionally, the British incarnations of pro-liberty political parties have been broadly underwhelming and, in some cases, deleterious to the cause of libertarianism. As an example, take the Libertarian Party in the United Kingdom – often referred to as LPUK. LibertariDan [has recently written an article](#) on the scandal that tore at least ten representatives, including the leader, out of the party in the space of forty-eight hours back in August 2020; some in the National Coordinating Committee attempted to remove a sitting member from the party on the basis of spurious allegations and in the style of a kangaroo court where the accusers simultaneously donned the personas of judge, jury and hangman. The aftermath of misconduct follows a remarkably

consistent pattern; the effect [is in the breakdown of professional and personal relationships while discourse becomes, at the very least, muddy](#). Finch-gate, [much like Raccoon-gate](#), was subject to an attempted cover-up. As though history were repeating itself, [the false depiction of events is still the depiction on display to the public](#). This compromise of honesty [prompted a joint statement from the former members of LPUK's National Coordinating Committee](#) to set the record straight.

One should hardly be surprised. LPUK has a particularly rotten history. At various times in the first half of the last decade, the party [has found itself caught up in financial scandals](#). Perhaps the most notable moment occurred when [it was alleged that over £4,000 of party funds had gone unaccounted for](#). Contemporaneous suggestions were mounted [that the Libertarian Party had adopted the status of a cult](#). As if by macabre coincidence – or maybe singing from the same unholy hymn sheet – just this week a member of the Scottish Libertarian Party's Constitutional Committee [was unceremoniously expelled in a shock announcement delivered on a Sunday evening](#) without apparent cause or reason stated. In the days since, observers on the Scottish Libertarians Facebook page have witnessed deflection and damage limitation by party spokespeople. There is little wonder why disillusionment among British libertarian voters is so rife. If only someone had an answer to the paradox that unfolds before our eyes – how can libertarian causes so often magnetise such authoritarian tendencies?

The main encumbrance for all pro-liberty political parties, aside from their innate hierarchical structure [itself a result of state laws and regulations since each must possess at least a Party Leader and Nominating Officer with one adopting Treasurer responsibilities](#), is that they each offer only a slightly nuanced variation on the same general theme. Arguably for England, this [stems from the time the United Kingdom Independence Party was thrust into public prominence](#)



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from 2012 onward; its decline, culminating in the successful 2016 EU Referendum result prompting Britain's exit, fractured the country's libertarian political base. Nigel Farage hardly helped matters when, in the 2019 General Election campaign, [an order was given to stand-down Brexit Party candidates in Conservative seats](#) and thus give the same old mainstream politics a free ride. One wonders how different the outcome would have been had Farage held his nerve instead of cutting off his nose to spite his face. Farage himself is indicative of the post-Brexit libertarian trend towards adopting "celebrity" figureheads as a party's raison d'être; in particular, one considers [Laurence Fox of the Reclaim Party](#) as a case in point. This has added nothing to credibility and unsurprisingly very little to spectacle.

However, each interpretation of the oft-recited lines of liberty does nothing to galvanise or enfranchise the vote of the same one per cent who would find themselves voting for such parties when it comes to the polls. As recent by-election results have demonstrated, several pro-liberty parties standing for the same constituency end up shattering the vote further. Inspiration should perhaps be drawn from



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left-wing minor parties; recently, [a memorandum of understanding was signed](#) by Breakthrough, the Northern Independence Party, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, and Left Unity earlier this year to reduce the potential for vote splitting. Often minor parties lack representation, operational capability and – most crucially – differentiation, such that pro-liberty individuals willing and able to record their vote for likeminded local candidates are not able to do so.

Furthermore, by virtue of their collective nature, they do nothing to add to the stock of the waning libertarian cause. [Rallies of tens of thousands of people in major cities across the country voicing opposition to mandatory vaccination](#)

[among other issues](#) has failed to coagulate into what could have been a powerful formal political movement which could have produced the ultimate goal of freedom-loving "bums on seats". New ideas are called for. [Independents for Liberty is a prime example of the differentiation that is required](#); operating on a basis of voluntarism with a nationwide network of experienced activists to call upon, the association stands well placed to challenge the authoritarian structure inherent in party politics. For reasons of transparency, it is an association this author declares an interest in as a former Steward and continuing associate.

What does the future hold for libertarian politics in the United Kingdom? That is a question that remains to be answered. In the face of the biggest crisis of freedom witnessed in our lives, the creep of corporate statism in the guise of a global pandemic, the liberty movement may just have won the battle. The war is yet to be won. If your ballot paper is without an option you deem to be acceptable or even palatable when you cast your vote on May 5, ask what more you can do to ensure that option becomes viable the next time round. Could you stand as a candidate? Can you spare some time to drop leaflets from door to door for someone who is standing? Is there a local issue in dire need of a liberty-orientated solution that you're able to speak passionately about? There is hope that the UK 'Bill of Rights' designed to replace the Human Rights Act [will include a legally recognisable defence of free speech](#); the time for a renaissance of libertarian values is now. With the World Economic Forum [embarking on a crusade to a cashless society where social credit comes at the whim of an interdependent globalised government](#), you should value your vote now more than ever. There may come a time sometime soon when your ability to vote is taken from you.

UNABASHED PATRIOTISM

By Mike Swadling ([Website](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Gettr](#))



Source: Mike Swadling (used with permission)

I've just spent a week in Florida; a trip to see among other things the USA Men's Soccer team play Panama (they won 5-1). Why would I (a Brit) do that you might ask? Well apart from the sunshine, the lack of lockdown with commitment to freedom in Florida, and the opportunity to find myself drinking cocktails on Daytona beach, a mate had a spare ticket. As anyone who has ever visited the United States will understand, the impression I came away with was one of unabashed patriotism. This leads me to two thoughts – firstly, why aren't we left with that impression from Hollywood and our media, and secondly, how do we get some of that over where we are?

'Soccer' as our cousins across the Atlantic Sea insist on calling our noble game has been growing rapidly in the US in recent years. Their top flight football 'Major League Soccer' (MLS) [has expanded from twenty teams to twenty-nine teams since 2016](#). After failing to qualify for the 2018 World Cup in Russia, the national side [has now qualified for Qatar 2022 with a team of an average age of 24](#) who should be at their peak for the 2026 World Cup jointly hosted by the USA, Mexico and Canada.

Football is best played in a stadium where supporters are close to the pitch, fans are singing, and they have roofs over much of the stands to keep the noise in. [The Exploria Stadium in Orlando ticked the boxes for the physical requirements](#), and the US fans sure brought the noise. Soccer support in the US runs somewhat as a counterculture, for people who fall outside the mainstream. It has a base both in the universities of the well-travelled middle class, and with recent immigrants who bring their soccer traditions to the US.

Match day means a few drinks to warm up for the game – fan zones nearer the ground and general enterprising zones of pubs further away. The Stars and Stripes were ubiquitous, but then they often are in the US. The crowd enroute was a mixture of accents, races, regions, all routing for one thing – the

USA. It's fair to say many people among this crowd did wonder who these people were in sports kits. Soccer for all its progress is still a minority sport in the US, but once people knew that the USA, their team, their nation, was playing at frankly anything they could not have been happier to see us – even to see the English bloke tagging along.

Back to my two questions. These Americans no matter where they were born were proud to be American; 'why aren't we left with that impression from Hollywood and our media'?

The media, political, "expert" class who frankly blight our lives too much just don't get it. To quote C. J. Cregg from the television programme *The West Wing*, 'being considered an "average American" is something Americans find to be positive and comforting'. I think this is equally true of most Brits. All too often we're just not meant to show it. Maybe it's that bad news sells, but surely somewhere we should see that



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Americans love America and that they couldn't be happier to celebrate their nation, which in many cases is their new nation. It's common among US soccer fans to have their state's name and the year they joined the union emblazoned on the back of their replica shirts. This leads to little more than some gentle ribbing and largely becomes a great conversation starter. You'd struggle to imagine that here.

Which makes me wonder, 'how do we get some of that in the UK. or even just England?' There have been various initiatives to get the Union flag flying on government buildings, although it often feels they are swapped out as quickly as possible. It's never been the case that local councils, government agencies, schools and other state institutions routinely fly the flag of the United Kingdom, or flags of each member nation. In the first century BC, Hillel the Elder said '[If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?](#)'. The elites might not be, but Main Street USA is certainly for the USA. For societies to function we don't need high taxes or welfare systems, but humans do need to feel part of a community at multiple levels. For us to respect each other's rights to say things we disagree with, the 'man on the Clapham Omnibus' needs to feel the other person is stuck on the same bus with them.

Here in the UK, we could stand up that bit more for the country and for our own nations within the Union. For all the problems with our history we should remember all the good our nation has done. We should remember that we are part of a Commonwealth comprised of fifty-four separate states all over the world. We are a democracy and broadly, although under constant attack, we have free speech. We should also remember we have no hope of living a harmonious society if we refuse to believe in the nation we live in. It was great to see unabashed patriotism in the US. A belief in their state, their team, their country. I don't for one moment think waving a flag, or all the flags of the UK will bring everyone together and solve all of society's ills, but in a world where more people are from more places, we need to find ways to build communities. Unashamedly getting behind our flag and our nation isn't a bad place to start.

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