

IDEAS, ACTION AND FREEDOM: SPEECH ON RECEIVING THE FIRST THATCHER AWARD



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FOR LIFE, LIBERTY AND PROPERTY

**Libertarian
Alliance**

IDEAS, ACTION AND FREEDOM

DAVID MARSLAND

I am immensely pleased and proud to have been chosen for the first Thatcher award.

It might seem honour enough to be presented with an award sponsored by Aims of Industry. Aims has for decades played a crucial role in the defence of freedom. I am grateful indeed to Michael Ivens and his colleagues for the honour they have done me by associating me with their courageous endeavours.

But in being chosen for the first Thatcher Award, and in receiving the Award from Mrs Thatcher herself, I am even further privileged. She has been one of our country's very greatest Prime Ministers. Under her leadership and because of her leadership Britain rejected the path of economic decline, social decay, and moral collapse onto which we had been led by her predecessors. British self-confidence has been retrieved and restored. Our proper influence in world affairs has been re-established. The stranglehold of socialist bureaucracy, oppressive unionism, and paternalist collectivism has been broken. The inequities, inefficiency, and moral hazards of state welfare have been decisively challenged.

All this and more has been achieved for us by this one remarkable woman. And that is only the first instalment, the parliamentary phase as it were. She remains a world statesman of the very highest stature. She has before her an ambitious programme - in which none of us can have much doubt she will succeed triumphantly - of entrenching and extending freedom here in Britain; of steering the EEC away from bureaucracy and collectivism towards competitive free enterprise; of assisting the peoples and nations of Eastern and Central Europe as they struggle out of socialist oppression and poverty towards democratic capitalism and prosperity; and of making the case for free trade, free enterprise, and democracy world wide.

For me to receive an Award named for her and from her own hands is a very great privilege and an exceptional honour. I am - and I put it with my usual understatement - grateful and proud.

MISCHIEVOUSLY DESTRUCTIVE INTELLECTUALS

This is not least because the Award is an influential acknowledgement of the significance of ideas, of academic and intellectual effort, and of sociological analysis.

Intellectuals have been among the most mischievously destructive enemies of industry, enterprise, and freedom, with sociologists in particular playing an increasingly influential part in mischief-making in recent years.

Their purblind prejudice against capitalism; their repulsive apologetics for socialist tyranny and incompetence; their childish contempt for industry, business, and the laws of economic reality; their sedulously naive faith in planning and state control; their exaggeration and misconstrual of poverty; their endless, groundless denigration of competi-

tion, individualism, and enterprise; and worst of all their cheap-jack moral relativism - all this has done immense damage, through their influence in the education system and the media, to the British people and to freedom and progress everywhere.

Fortunately there are alternative intellectual and sociological visions, more intelligent, more objective, and more open to the truth about the kind of values and institutions which freedom and human progress require.

DISSIDENT CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGISTS

I ought, as I receive this Award for my own modest contributions to the analysis of freedom, to pay some brief tribute to those who made my work possible.

One of the pioneering sociologists, **Max Weber**, expended his uniquely powerful intellect and scholarship on exposing the fallacies of Marxist and socialist interpretations of the social world. He observes that the so-called "social order" with which the intellectuals of his day sought to replace the "anarchy of the market" and the supposed "incoherence" of democracy would herald subjugation and social impotence "under the tutelage of the only really inescapable power - the bureaucracy in state and economy".

More recently, the increasingly influential vapourings of socialist sociologists have been challenged by the realism and humanism of **Talcott Parsons**, **Raymond Aron**, and **Peter Berger**. Berger's book, *The Capitalist Revolution*, should be recommended reading world-wide.

Then there is a small band of bravely dissident contemporary sociologists whose influence and support continue to be crucial to my work - **Donald MacRae**, **Julius Gould**, **David Martin**, **Digby Anderson**, **Dennis O'Keeffe**, **Ralph Segalman**, **David Levy**, and **Peter Saunders**.

To these I should add, in this roll call of unorthodox honour for those who should share with me in the distinction of the Thatcher Award, some few other distinguished scholars who, while not sociologists, have contributed vitally towards the creation of a sociology of freedom - **George Gilder**, **Charles Murray**, **Tom Sowell**, **Walter Williams**, **John Gray**, **Kenneth Minogue**, **Roger Scruton**, **Antony Flew**, **Norman Stone**, and **Arther Seldon**. Their work merits close attention and wider dissemination if the defence and extension of freedom is our purpose.

All my efforts - in my teaching, my research, and my writing - are committed to pursuing the truth about society and social relations. My conclusion is that we should follow Mrs Thatcher closely in the positive watch-words she has given us: *competition*; *profit*; *enterprise*; *self-reliance*; *family*; *duty*; and last but not least at this turning point in Britain's history - *nation*.

I should also, in concluding, offer my thanks and congratulations to the sculptor of the Award, Ivan Klapez, and wish the Croatian people well in *their* struggle for freedom. Thank you all.

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