

Conservatism is
merely a ruling class
ideology



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Conservatism has three strands: Traditional, New Right and Post New right conservatism. It serves in the interest of the rich and powerful and it serves in the interest of every social class, including the poor. Marxists in particular would argue that conservatism is a class based ideology. They would also argue that ideologies reflect the interest of a particular class. Burke was a traditional conservative and he believed in the organic state. Traditional conservatives are motivated by the organic state they believe that the society is a living entity, rather than a mechanism.

They consider society as a pyramid and command structure, which serves in the interest of the rich because society is fixed and the rich will always be at the top. Society can never have socialequalitybecause of hierarchy. They do not believe in meritocracy and individualism, they believe that society is more important than the individual, therefore they believe in collectivism. People may believe that the ideology is good but in reality it is not because people do not have rights they have duties and conservatives only recognize equality of status.

Socialists believe in economic equality, this is the only equality that does not keep people down. Conservatism was reaction against Liberalism (French revolution). Burke was against the French revolution. Disraeli was also motivated by class interest. He introduced One-nation conservatism, which was about keeping social cohesion between the rich and the poor. Disraeli gave the vote to the urban working class male because if he did not the Liberals would have done so. Burke once said that he 'the palace is not safe when the cottage is not happy' meaning that the rich are not happy when the poor are not satisfied.

If the poor is not satisfied then there will not be social stability, because there will be a revolution. Burke introduced social reforms to stop a revolution. Randolph Churchill formulated 'Tory democracy' which stated that in order to gain the support of the working-class they have to develop the empire by making them believe in it. They did not want to do too much for the poor, but rather to help them enough to keep them happy.

Conservatives voted against the NHS, which was brought in by Labour, because it is a ruling class ideology.

They only decided to accept the NHS because they are pragmatic and they did not believe in nationalized industries because it took power away for the poor. They believed in the mixed economy. They disliked nationalization and wanted to privatize most nationalized businesses. They introduced the minimum wage and it was popular and a vote winner. In 1979, Thatcher became Prime Minister and she also served the interest of the rich. She privatized industries such as British telecom, British railways.

Liberal New right believed in and rolling back the state, hence the belief in laissez-faire economics. They believed in the non-interventionist state, that the state will not intervene in the economy to help the poor. For example: the Battle of Orgreaves, the miner's strike; the government refused to subsidize what they called the uneconomic picks. Thatcher setup grant maintained schools which got more money. Schools were a two tier system and the 'better-off' benefited from this. This basically suggests that Thatcher reeks of the rich.

Society was more differential because people had more respect. Disraeli introduced one-nation conservatism, and he was genuinely concerned about the poor, evidenced in his quote, 'there is a gap between the rich and the poor' and his Crystal Palace speech. Disraeli detested capitalism because it creates inequality and exploits workers. He did what he had to do to stop a revolution, the invention of One-nation. Burke believed in the organic state and this was not just about the rich and the poor, as a traditional conservative he believed that everyone should be valued equally.

The whole of the ideology was paternalistic meaning that conservatism like a father cares for the people, not just in the interest of the rich. This is confirmed in the quote, " Society is a partnership between... " it suggests that we are all valuable. All traditional conservatives believe in social reforms because of the rule of One-nation. In Harold Macmillan's 'Middle Way' (1938), he advocates the mixed economy. After the WWII, they realized that there was a new way to help the poor by accepting the welfare state, they also accepted Keynesianism by reflate the economy.

Conservatives were very Keynes on grammar school, after all Thatcher went to a Grammar school. As Liberal New right Thatcher believed in meritocracy, individualism and embourgeoisement. Individualism means you can make it and meritocracy means that you can make it on merit. For example, selling council houses; buying it means that it is now our property, owned democracy. People could buy shares, share owning democracy, not just the rich and the powerful, but also the poor. Post-New right, neo-liberal leaders: Hague, Smith, Major, Howard and Cameron, all have business interest.

Cameron has adopted and fused neo-liberalism with elements of One-nation. Cameron believes in social responsibility. This means that society has to work together to look after and care for each other, however if we care for each other the government will not help us. For example: Jamie Oliver; it was not the government that improved school dinners. Social responsibility is a way of saying 'rolling back the state', Cameron uses One-nation rhetoric, though he still wants a smaller state, he does not want to regulate the state.

He wants to take politicians out of the NHS. He fused neo-liberal elements and one-nation because he cares about the economy, example targeting families who have to pay child-minders; instead they pay money to family relatives to look after your children. This is One-nation because keeps social cohesion. In 1979, the working-class voted Thatcher in because in 1983, the Conservatives promised that people could buy council houses and Labour said they would nationalize the banks. Thatcher would win because she had taken on the Falklands war and found victory.