

LECTURE

DELIVERED APRIL 8, 2011

No. 1203 | MARCH 29, 2012

Down the Road to Serfdom: Warnings from a British Friend

Daniel Hannan, MEP

Abstract

The United States was born out of a popular revolt against a distant and autocratic government, and its model has always been based around the maximum decentralization and democratization of power. Now that model is being abandoned. The policies currently being pursued amount to a comprehensive program of Europeanization—European welfare, health care, taxes, carbon levies, unemployment rates, and foreign policy. The community of free English-speaking democracies is the standing, permanent coalition of the willing, but it depends on America’s commitment and America’s keeping true to the Anglo-American common law heritage of freedom, parliamentary rule, and personal liberty without which America is made less exceptional, poorer and darker.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at <http://report.heritage.org/hl1203>

The Russell Kirk Memorial Lectures

Produced by the B. Kenneth Simon
Center for Principles and Politics

The Heritage Foundation
214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20002-4999
(202) 546-4400 | heritage.org

Nothing written here is to be construed as necessarily reflecting the views of The Heritage Foundation or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before Congress.

It’s wonderful to be here and to be talking to such a huge crowd. We don’t often get a turnout like this, we members of the European Parliament; we’re not generally the most popular people in Britain. I’ve become accustomed to this over the years, but it is a pleasure to be able to talk in a place where no one can vote for me or against me.

I’m a great Jeffersonian. You will find no one in Britain—or almost no one—so keen to apply the principles that your third President adumbrated to our conditions. But I’ll bet you even he occasionally liked to get to a place where it didn’t matter what he said for election reasons.

An Extraordinary and Different Country

Since I am at The Heritage Foundation, I would like to speak of the heritage which it was founded to preserve. The Heritage Foundation is the vindicator, the guardian, and the custodian of a unique tradition—one that resides exclusively in this country.

This is an extraordinary and different country. I know your President is uncomfortable with the idea of American exceptionalism, but you don’t have to live here to be inspired by the story of a country that takes

TALKING POINTS

- Americans are not simply a random set of individuals born to another set of random individuals. They are the inheritors and guardians of an exalted tradition. It is their common law heritage, a heritage of freedom, the rule of law, and personal liberty, that makes America exceptional.
- The constitutional mechanisms designed to constrain government have allowed America to remain free and prosperous.
- Today, however, America is going down the European path toward more statism, more regulation, more state control. People need something better to believe in.
- America must reclaim its heritage of constitutional freedom and re-assert itself on the world stage.

a dream of freedom and actualizes it in a constitution; that turns it into a living nation; that puts the flag of that nation on the moon; that then exports its dream of liberty, freeing hundreds of millions of people from the evils of autocracy.

I have a troop of cousins who live in Philadelphia, and I never go and visit them without paying a little pilgrimage to the old courthouse, because there was the purest form of our British conceptions of freedom put into the form of black and white. The Constitution encoded freedoms that were very real. The freedoms that had brought people to this part of the world in the first place—the freedom to worship as you wanted, freedom to congregate as you wanted, freedom from an overclass of prelates and princes and authoritarian governments—were very real to the people who put their names to the Constitution.

And it did exactly what it was meant to do. It was, if you like, the genotype, the DNA that was encoded at the moment of the conception of this country, and the genotype is all around us in institutions that perhaps, because it's human nature to take things for granted, are not as appreciated as they deserve to be.

All of these peculiar American mechanisms that are designed to constrain the government—primaries, ballot and referendum procedures, the dispersal of power, federalism, the election of virtually every public official from the school board to the sheriff—are in many cases unique to this country, but they didn't come about by accident. There is a straight line that runs from the old courthouse in Philadelphia to your constitutional institutions today.

If there is one thing that strikes me every time I visit the United States, it's that most people have no idea of how fortunate they are.

Let me now say a hard thing that perhaps needs to be said more often. It's as a result of those institutions that this country has remained prosperous—not just free, but rich. One of the reasons that people here are productive—and it now takes four Germans to put in the same man hours as three Americans over one year—is that the costs of falling behind are harder. The incentives are rigged toward success, toward productivity. If you penalize wealthy people in order to reward poor people, you will end up with fewer wealthy people and more poor people.

The Europeanization of America

What's happening now is that that model is being abandoned. America is becoming more like anywhere else, less American—by which I mean less prosperous, less free, less independent. I know the direction in which you're heading because I have been a member of the European Parliament since 1999. My present resembles your future—or at least the future toward which your present rulers seem intent on taking you.

If you look at the policies currently being pursued by your governors, they are not a random series of initiatives that have been lashed together accidentally; they amount to a comprehensive program of Europeanization—European welfare, European health care, European taxes, European carbon levies, European unemployment rates, European foreign policy. And let me tell you, I have lived in your future and it stinks. Think of me, if you like,

as that guy in the H.G. Wells novel or in the film *The Time Machine* who comes from the future and says, “No! There's still time! You can still turn aside; you can still save yourselves!”

Let me give you a statistic. Forty years ago, the nations of “Old Europe”—the 15 members of the European Union as it stood before it enlarged to the former Communist countries—accounted for 36 percent of the world's wealth. Today, that figure is 26 percent, and in the year 2020, it will be 15 percent. Over the same period, the U.S.'s share of world GDP has remained almost completely stable: It was 26.3 percent in 1970; it's 26.7 percent today.

THE POLICIES CURRENTLY BEING PURSUED BY AMERICA'S LEADERS ARE NOT A RANDOM SERIES OF INITIATIVES THAT HAVE BEEN LASHED TOGETHER ACCIDENTALLY; THEY AMOUNT TO A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF EUROPEANIZATION—EUROPEAN WELFARE, HEALTH CARE, TAXES, CARBON LEVIES, UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, FOREIGN POLICY.

Why is that happening? I came through France yesterday. The country is again convulsed by another series of rolling strikes because of the appalling plan to raise the retirement age to 42 or something. Then I arrived here, and here are people taking to the streets demonstrating against social entitlements.

Bear in mind those two images: the grumpy French workers with placards saying, “Let's block the economy”—I'm not making this up—and “Strike 'til you retire.” Compare

that with the image of your Tea Partiers with their “We’re taxed enough already” and “Don’t tread on me” and “Who is John Galt?” Now put those two things together and look at the comparative growth of the economies. There’s a connection there.

In the short term, you can have a great time with the European social model—paid vacations and paternity leave and all that—until the money runs out, which is the moment we’ve reached right now.

Europe enjoyed what we can now see in retrospect was something of an artificial boom in the years after the Second World War. They had everything going for them. They still had a disciplined, industrious workforce. There was the artificial low—there had been this massive destruction of infrastructure during the fighting—but there were still the people there to rebuild the bridges and the factories. Everything was set for a massive economic takeoff.

There was migration for the first time from the Mediterranean to the northern steel works and coal fields, and as if all of that wasn’t enough, there was, in addition to the \$12 billion of aid paid between 1948 and 1952 from the U.S., an additional \$13 billion through the Marshall Plan, as well as the U.S. underwriting Europe’s security, which freed up a lot of money for civil programs. In those circumstances, it would have been amazing if Europe hadn’t grown.

But, of course, human nature being what it is, very few EU politicians admitted even to themselves that the success of their continent’s economy during the ’50s and ’60s had been due either to the bouncing back from an artificial low or to the external subventions they received

from you. So they convinced themselves that they’d come up with this brilliant model that was neither capitalist nor socialist; it was in between, a mixed market economy, trade unions and employers talking to each other—corporatism.

WE NOW SEE WHERE THE EUROPEAN MODEL LEADS: IT LEADS TO STAGNATION, TO UNEMPLOYMENT, AND ULTIMATELY TO BANKRUPTCY.

Well, we now see where that leads: It leads to stagnation, to unemployment, and ultimately to bankruptcy. That is not a road down which you want to go, my friends. It really isn’t. You deserve better.

It’s not just the economic ill effects; it’s the social ill effects that go with it. When you have a well-farized society, it isn’t just bad for growth; much more than that, you find that as the power of the state grows, the private sector is squeezed out. The traditional authority figures—the parents, the school principals, the clergymen—find that they’ve been pushed aside by this new army of clerks, bureaucrats, and inspectors issuing reams of regulations. Virtue is nationalized. Decency is displaced by state activity.

There was a time not so very long ago when any adult seeing a child out of school in term time would have stopped the child and said, “Why aren’t you in class?” Now that is seen as the state’s responsibility. There was a time not so very long ago when it was up to all of us to make sure that our elderly neighbor was collecting her milk each morning. Now that’s seen as social services. The worst impact of this growth of government, its chief ill, is not that it makes the economy less competitive; it’s that

it makes people less decent. It frays the bonds which used to tie society together.

European economy, European welfare, European health care—I really hope you’ve thought this one through, because you’re not going to be able to back out once you go down this road. Once politicians become responsible for everything that happens in every hospital, it becomes impossible to reform the system—even seriously to propose any reform to the system. I discovered this last year.

I was asked on a U.S. TV channel whether I would recommend the British model, and I said, look at the statistics. You have a good or a bad experience in your system; you can have a good or a bad experience in my system. In both systems, there are lots of very dedicated, very generous people giving up their time and wonderful nurses and so on, but look at the hard statistics you can measure. Survival rates, longevity, waiting time for an operation—on every measurable factor, Britain is not the worst place in the industrialized world, but it is close to the bottom of the league. I’m sure we’re better than Paraguay or Guam, but compared to other industrialized countries, it’s almost the last place you’d want to have a stroke or heart disease or cancer. And that is not because of the people who are working in the system, who are as dedicated as anyone; it’s because they’re in a system that doesn’t actualize their potential.

Here’s the point: I don’t need to convince you about the pros and cons of the health care reform. Once you have it, it becomes almost impossible politically to reverse it. We have 1.3 million people working in the National Health Service, and any call for reform is portrayed as an attack

on our hardworking doctors and nurses, which means that you have budgets that can only ever grow, and you have a system where it becomes very difficult to crowbar any kind of consumer choice. Please don't even mention that if this doesn't work out, then in a couple years time you can just reverse it. That's not how it works.

ALL OF EUROPE'S PROBLEMS WITH HEALTH CARE, PROBLEMS WITH WELFARE, PROBLEMS WITH THE ECONOMY, AND DIFFICULTIES IN COMMUNICATING A SENSE OF NATIONAL PRIDE TO NEWCOMERS ARE A CONSEQUENCE OF BIG, REMOTE GOVERNMENT.

All of these things I'm talking about—all of these diverse woes in Europe—spout from a single source, which is the excessive centralization of power. The problems with health care, the problems with welfare, the problems with the economy, the difficulties we have communicating a sense of national pride to newcomers—all of those things are a consequence of big, remote government.

Consider the example of China. China 500 years ago would have seemed almost certain to be the country that would dominate the rest of the millennium. If you'd gone from China to Europe half a millennium ago, you would have seen in China the most amazing technological marvels—the canals, the cartography, the astronomy, the gunpowder, the paper money—and then you'd have seen this broken, scattered group of tribes at the western tip of the Eurasian landmass. You'd have assumed that it was going to be China that was going to sail around Africa and discover Portugal.

Why didn't that happen? Because China became a centralized empire. It became bureaucratized, highly taxed, highly regulated. Europe, on the other hand, was a diverse plurality of competing states, each one striving to outdo the other, each able to copy what worked elsewhere, piloting and trialing new ideas, spreading best practice. That fostered an extraordinary spirit of enterprise, adventurism, boldness, and it led to the European economic miracle.

Here's the tragedy of our generation: Just as China is going in the opposite direction, just as they have got the hang of devolving power to their provinces, of stimulating enterprise and free trade, of lifting restrictions, Europe is going in the opposite direction. You don't have Mandarins in China now, but you have plenty of Mandarins in Brussels. We are repeating the errors of the Ming Dynasty. We have become the new highly regulated closed system, and that's why power and wealth is shifting from Europe to China.

But there's nothing inevitable about that. If we remembered what brought us to success in the first place, we could reverse that process tomorrow.

The American Alternative

All nations, all unions, all politics to some extent reflect the timing and circumstances of their birth. The United States was born out of a popular revolt against a distant and autocratic government, and therefore, its sympathy and its model has always been based around the maximum decentralization and democratization of power.

To see how unusual that is, compare it to what happens in other places. The European Union, tragically, is also a child of its time. Its founders

had come through the Second World War, and their experience of democracy had not been a good one. They were very nervous at the thought that if people were allowed to vote for whomever they wanted, they might fall for demagogues and rabble rousers, and so they deliberately created a system where the people are sidelined—not entirely excluded, but downgraded—where supreme power is wielded by appointed officials who don't need to worry about public opinion: the European Commission.

Compare those two systems—the one that's given you the demonstrations here against the state and the ones in France in favor. Why have they turned out in the way that they have? You can do no better than looking at the foundational documents. Your Constitution, with all the amendments, is 7,200 words long; the European Constitution is 78,000 words long. Yours is mainly about the freedom of the individual; the EU's is mainly about the power of the state. Yours is about the dispersal of decision-making. Line one of the EU's foundational treaty commits its member states to establishing “an ever-closer union.” If you like, it's the opposite of Jeffersonian democracy.

Your Declaration of Independence guarantees your right to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness. The EU's equivalent, which is called the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, guarantees our right to strike action, free health care, and affordable housing. You see the difference? One is about the power of the individual; the other is about the power of the state.

If you think I am being unreasonable in making this comparison, I refer you to the author of the European Constitution, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the former president of France, who at the

founding conference said, “This is our Philadelphia moment” and went on to compare himself to Thomas Jefferson. I was sitting there as he said it.

Where does one even begin to unpack that comparison? Why don’t we start with this: Jefferson wasn’t there; he was, as Mr. Giscard might have been expected to know, the U.S. ambassador to Paris at the time, so he wasn’t present when the Constitution was being drafted.

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE GUARANTEES THE RIGHT TO LIFE, LIBERTY, THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS. THE EU’S CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS GUARANTEES THE RIGHT TO STRIKE ACTION, FREE HEALTH CARE, AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING. ONE IS ABOUT THE POWER OF THE INDIVIDUAL; THE OTHER IS ABOUT THE POWER OF THE STATE.

But the real absurdity of the comparison is when you look at how the two documents were ratified. Your Constitution, as I understand it, came into effect following separate endorsement by the 13 member states—or, to be exactly literal about it, nine of them. The EU Constitution was repeatedly rejected in referendums by 55 percent of French voters, by 63 percent of Dutch voters, by 54 percent of Irish voters and was imposed anyway.

What I’m getting at is that it’s human nature to be blasé about what we’re familiar with. We take things for granted. But please don’t be blasé about the precious constitutional inheritance you have.

There is a direct link that runs from Philadelphia to the system that has now created your spontaneous popular anti-tax movement. There is a reason why the Tea Party has happened here and hasn’t happened in other countries. It’s not because of some magical quality in the American soil or the American sky or the American seas; it’s because you have a dispersed democratic system where people expect, because they have open primaries, to be able to pick the candidates they want, and therefore, they can crowbar their ideas into the legislature.

There isn’t a country in the world where people enjoy paying tax. The standard view of the Tea Party in Europe is that it’s just another example of the demented American conservative movement. I have to say, I have yet to meet a constituent of mine who likes the idea of paying more tax to hire more government bureaucrats.

Public opinion here is in line with public opinion in Mexico, in Pakistan, in any other country in the world, so why is it a peculiar American phenomenon to have people taking to the streets demanding lower taxes? Because they think it will work. They think they can do something about it. In every other democracy, you have political candidates who, one way or another, are chosen by their parties, which usually means by the party leader and his clique, and that means that whole currents of opinion can be excluded from the legislature.

Behind all the mockery of the Tea Party movement in Europe, behind all the sophistry, there lurks the uneasy realization that if there were open primaries on the other side of the Atlantic, people might also start behaving like Americans—might

start demanding lower taxes, lower borrowing, lower spending, less bureaucracy.

Immigration and Integration

Another area which vividly reveals the difference between Americans and Europeans is immigration. We plainly have a problem. Some boys born in Britain have been so alienated from the country which gave them their nurture that they’ve been prepared to cross half the world in order to take up arms against our servicemen in Iraq or Afghanistan. Two of my fellow countrymen went to Gaza as suicide bombers.

Plainly, something has happened that needs to be addressed, but it’s terribly important to be clear about where the problem comes from and to make the prescription suited to the diagnosis. Some people think that England is about to be lost to Sharia law and we’re all going to be wearing burqas and so on.

I have to tell you, I have 150,000 Muslim constituents in my region of the country, and I can tell you hand on heart that I have never once heard one of them say to me: “Well, you know, maybe we could have an Iranian-type legal system here. Maybe that would be better.” On the contrary, what you hear over and over again is: “This is the best place for a Muslim to live in. We’re free to practice our faith; we’re not oppressed by these ridiculous rules telling us we have to wear veils or grow beards or whatever it is.”

That’s not to say there isn’t a problem, but it is to say we have to be clear that the analysis that the jihadist madmen make, which is that the West has a problem with Islam as a whole rather than with the terrorists, is not one that we should give succor to.

Why is it, then, that some boys in Western Europe have turned against the societies they've grown up in? It's to do with how hard we have made it for anyone to feel patriotic about the societies they've come to in Europe.

There are about as many Muslims in the U.S. as there are in Britain, the Netherlands, and Belgium combined. We don't have exact figures. The U.S. doesn't keep census data, and it depends on how many of the adherents of the various African American Muslim organizations founded in the 20th century you count as orthodox Muslims. But there's somewhere between 2.5 million and 4.5 million American Muslims—almost all of whom, according to every test of opinion carried out here, feel very grateful to be here, very patriotic, and have a more positive view of the U.S. than their non-Muslim neighbors do.

FOR 30 OR 40 YEARS, THE ELITES IN EUROPE HAVE SYSTEMATICALLY DERIDED AND TRADUCED THE IDEA OF NATIONAL LOYALTY. IS IT ANY WONDER THAT THE NEWCOMER FINDS IT DIFFICULT TO FIT IN?

The U.S. is very good at integrating newcomers. In a way, the country was set up to do that. It's got advantages. There was a lovely, characteristically warm and upbeat phrase that Ronald Reagan used when he said, "Every immigrant makes America more American." The things that foreign anti-Americans caricature when they want to attack this country—the visible symbols of American patriotism, the stars-and-stripes hats, the Uncle Sam paraphernalia—that, or at least the sentiment that gives rise to it, is what makes it so easy for a settler to buy into the society.

We used to do that very well in my country. The issue of British Islam is not a new one. There were tens of millions of British Muslims a hundred years ago living under the British Crown, and we were rather worried at one stage about what would be the impact on their loyalty if we were to find ourselves at war with a Muslim power.

It became clear at one point that we were going to end up in a state of war with Turkey. Ottoman Turkey was not just the most important Muslim country in the world. The sultan was also the caliph; he was the commander of the faithful.

The British cabinet discussed this back and forth: What's going to happen to our Muslims in India and Malay and so on if we find ourselves at war with the caliph? In the event, no problem at all; they volunteered in their millions and served with great distinction on the eastern and western fronts. Why? Because we were a brand that people wanted to buy into. "Thou must eat the White Queen's meat, and all her foes are thine," says Kipling's border chieftain to his son. It was very easy to want to be part of what Britain stood for a hundred years ago.

Now, compare that to the experience of the great-great-grandsons of those people, growing up in a welfare state in inner cities, where the only experiences they've had of contact with the state have taught them to despise it, where if they got any British history at all in their schools, it would have been presented to them as a hateful chronicle of racism and exploitation. For 30 or 40 years, the elites in Europe have systematically derided and traduced the idea of national loyalty. Is it any wonder that the newcomer finds it difficult to fit in? What is there for him to be loyal to?

Because the United Kingdom has been so disdained by its own leaders in my lifetime, you can see that the original inhabitants are beginning to grope back toward older patriotisms, to describe themselves as English or Scottish or Welsh or whatever it is. But where does that leave the children of immigrants? What is there for them to be part of?

In order to solve this problem, we need to give people something better to believe in. The European Union has taken our identities off our passports. If people felt happy with the identity on their passport, maybe they wouldn't need to find an ideological alternative. That's something that, up until now, you have been very good at.

I was talking to a Polish friend the other day, a member of the European Parliament. He's my age. He'd grown up under Jaruzelski in the Communist times. He was talking to me about how Poles have been impacted by the election of a Polish pope, the influence that had had on him as a teenager. He told me something that I'd never heard before. He said John Paul II never directly criticized the Communist authorities, never once. He never attacked the Soviet Union; he never attacked the Soviet occupation. He was much too clever to do anything like that. He just offered something better.

A Warning from a British Friend

Why do I come here as a patriotic British politician and laud American exceptionalism? Why do I come here and give this paean of praise to a country that was, after all, founded in a rebellion against the British Crown? Wasn't the U.S. a reaction against the British Empire? Didn't Paul Revere awaken a nation with his cry of "the British are coming"?

Does anyone know what Paul Revere actually shouted? “The regulars are out!” It would have been weird for him to say “the British are coming” to a population that was entirely British. How that story has been remembered, how you guys were taught it in school, tells us a lot about the way in which we’ve moved away from how the people who actually fought in the Revolutionary War saw it at the time.

If you had gone back to the 1770s and spoken to any American, patriot or loyalist, the idea that he was in a state of war against a foreign country would have seemed utterly absurd. Indeed, the main complaint in the Declaration of Independence was precisely that the Crown was using foreign troops—in other words, people who were not British. They saw themselves not as radical revolutionaries, but as political conservatives. All they were fighting for in their own minds was the fundamental freedoms they had always assumed to be theirs as Englishmen. The revolutionaries, as they saw it, were those in the Hanoverian court who were trying to unbalance the traditional English constitution—trying to strengthen the executive at the expense of the legislature to pass taxes without due authority, to pass laws by people who were not properly elected.

In other words, when I said there was a straight line running from the courthouse in Philadelphia to the Tea Party today and the defense of your dispersed and decentralized democracy, I might have pushed that line rather further back and said there’s a line that runs all the way back to Runnymede where the Magna Carta was signed in my

constituency at a site which was, by the way, unmarked until the 1960s when a memorial was finally erected there by the American Bar Association, who were in no doubt that there was a connection between British freedoms and American ones.

Why is it that I am stressing our shared Anglosphere heritage of freedom? Why is it that I am laying emphasis on the roots in the common law tradition, in the English parliamentary tradition, of much of what actuated your Founders? Because for the first time, I think your country is led by somebody who has no appreciation for that heritage whatever, who is, on the contrary, embarrassed by it, and who therefore is turning his back not only on my country, but on that bit of your country that you inherited from us, which is the bit that works.

**THE BEST AND HIGHEST FORMS
OF BRITISH FREEDOM HAVE BEEN
FORGOTTEN IN THE COUNTRY WHERE
THEY WERE FIRST ARTICULATED, BUT
THEY HAVE SURVIVED HERE.**

I’ve been in British politics 12 years, and for that whole time, I’ve been arguing for an application of Jeffersonian principles to British political conditions. I’ve been arguing for elected sheriffs and local taxes and all of these things, and occasionally people say to me, “You’re trying to Americanize our country.” And I say, “Yeah, okay, it’s true these things survived in the U.S. when they were lost here, but where do you think they came from originally?” It’s like those varieties of grape that only survived in California when the Phylloxera blight was wiping out the

ancestral vines in Europe; the best and highest forms of British freedom have been forgotten in the country where they were first articulated, but they have survived here.

That’s why it’s not just as a friend of America, but as a British patriot that I mourn when I see the abandonment of that heritage in this country. There’s no doubt in my mind that you now have, for the first time in more than 100 years, an occupant in the White House who feels nothing positive toward my country.

You can infer that in lots of ways. It’s not the little things. It’s not the returning of the bust of Winston Churchill; it’s not the gift to the Queen of an iPod containing his own speeches; it’s certainly not the “dissing” of Gordon Brown—I, of all people, am not in a place to complain about that. There are the big things. I mean, to see your Secretary of State lining up behind the Argentinean position on the Falkland Islands; you’re now taking sides with Hugo Chávez and Argentina and Evo Morales against us. That is a new and alarming development.

I’d almost go so far as to say there has never been a worse time to be a U.S. ally than now. Look at the countries that you have alienated in the last few years. Poland and the Czech Republic went massively out of their way, took a big political hit, in order to agree to the missile defense system and then, having sustained the electoral damage of having made themselves targets, were told that it wasn’t going to be built anyway. The countries that have been most alienated by this Administration are Poland, the Czech Republic, India, Israel, Canada—quite an

achievement to have fallen out with them—and us, by a President who is very happy now to say that Russia, France, and Germany are his key friends.

You get the point that I'm making: When he turns his back on the U.K. and what we stand for, he's also turning his back on that bit of your Constitution that he associates with all these dead old guys in powdered wigs. But those dead guys in powdered wigs are what made you prosperous and free and independent, and what they did then still lives today. When you shift power from the 50 states to Washington, when you shift power from the elected representative to the federal czar, when you shift power from the citizen to the state, you make your country less prosperous and less free and less American—more like everywhere else. And it's a process that is all the more dangerous because it is being carried out by somebody whose sincerity I don't doubt for a moment.

There are parallels with Franklin Roosevelt too. There's a financial crisis, apparently a crisis of capitalism, and a Democrat President gets in with an enormous majority in both houses to back him up, thinks he has a mandate to solve it, and then immediately sets about removing every possible check on his power. He treats the legislature as a rubber stamp; he starts ruling through executive decree; he tries to pack the Supreme Court; he presides over a centralization of power in the White House bureaucracy from which this country has still not recovered.

That's what I mean by making America less American. That's what I mean by trampling on the inheritance of your Founders. When you turn your back on that common law heritage, that heritage of freedom, of parliamentary rule, of personal

liberty, you make your country less exceptional, and you make it poorer and darker.

That's what I mean by the heritage of this country and the heritage of all free English-speaking peoples. We have turned our backs to some measure on that heritage. We did so when we joined the European Union. We've now seen what it means to have the nightmares of your patriot leaders from the 1770s now coming true: taxes being levied without popular consent from Brussels, laws being passed without parliamentary approval, and a huge expansion of the state.

In your current system, you get the last echo, the last vestige of that great notion of British freedom. You can imagine how I feel, then, when I see you repeating our mistakes, going down the same road toward more statism, more regulation, more state control.

The world has a stake in your success. The promise of your constitution didn't just serve to keep your country wealthy and successful and strong; it also drove your fathers to carry freedom to other continents. As a British conservative above all, I feel I have a certain stake in your success. When you see a friend repeating your mistake, you try to warn him.

Conclusion

I stand here as someone who loves his country. I'm never happier than when I'm tramping around in the English countryside. But, of course, my attitude when I come here is that I want you all to feel the same way about your country. That is a natural thing for any conservative to feel. Lefties never understand this; they always think that if you say, "I love my country," you're therefore disparaging everyone else's. On the

contrary: We understand as conservatives that patriotism is what makes you unselfish. It's what makes you do things for other people. It's what brings out the best in people.

If you do what we've done and hand away the reality of your national sovereignty, that is bound to have an impact on how you see your country. If you see your brand derided and traduced, when you see your indignant peoples not encouraged to feel good about themselves, you alienate the people who have arrived more recently.

WHEN YOU SHIFT POWER FROM THE 50 STATES TO WASHINGTON, WHEN YOU SHIFT POWER FROM THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE TO THE FEDERAL CZAR, WHEN YOU SHIFT POWER FROM THE CITIZEN TO THE STATE, YOU MAKE YOUR COUNTRY LESS PROSPEROUS AND LESS FREE AND LESS AMERICAN—MORE LIKE EVERYWHERE ELSE.

I've seen this happen in the United Kingdom; I've seen it happen in my own constituency. Because Britishness is held cheap, is scorned, people start groping back toward older identities as English or Scottish or Welsh. Where does that leave the child of immigrants? What is there for him to be a part of?

You historically have been brilliant at making everybody feel that wherever they came from, this is a dream that is for all of them. I'm always struck by people coming here and feeling optimistic, feeling buoyant, restless, and energetic. It's a wonderful thing to have. But, my friends, if you start going around the world apologizing for everything, you make it much harder for them. You

make it much harder for yourselves, and you make it much harder for your friends. You deserve better, and we expect better.

I've been reading Andrew Roberts's *History of the English Speaking Peoples*, and there's something that Winston Churchill said in May 1938:

It's the English-speaking nations who almost alone keep alight the torch of freedom. These things are a powerful incentive to collaboration, with nations as with individuals; if you care deeply for the same things and these things are threatened, it is natural to work together to preserve them.

We've seen the truth of those words vindicated several times.

When you look at freedom truly being under threat, when we talk about the West responding, what we really mean by the West is the community of free English-speaking democracies. It is that standing, permanent coalition of the willing, and that I hope is our future outside the European Union. But it does depend on your commitment, and it does depend on you keeping true to the heritage which this foundation, more than any other, has preserved and championed over the decades.

My friends, you are not simply a random set of individuals born to another set of random individuals. You are the inheritors and guardians of an exalted tradition. Let me close with a heartfelt invocation from a Briton who loves his country to Americans who still believe

in theirs. Honor the vision of your Founders. Respect the most sublime constitution devised by human intelligence. Cleave fast to the freedoms you inherited from your parents, and keep them intact for your children.

—**Daniel Hannan**, a former president of the Oxford University Conservative Association, is the author of *The New Road to Serfdom: A Letter of Warning to America* (Harper, 2010). He was elected to the European Parliament in 1999, at the age of 27, and has been re-elected twice. This lecture is adapted from remarks delivered at The Heritage Foundation's Annual Leadership Conference and Board Meeting, held in Palm Beach, Florida, April 6–9, 2011.