FOREWORD

There are a number of things that have hugely impressed me about this, the first Parliament Street publication. The first is the breadth of thinking, covering a wide range of areas, from energy policy to immigration and from Islamic fundamentalism to the role of technology in government. In an election that already looks like having a depressingly narrow policy base, this is both welcome and refreshing. The second is the very personal nature of the writing and the passion contained within it, drawing on the wide background of contributors from business, politics, academia and, importantly, none of the above.

The combination of these gives the feel of an agenda coming up from the grassroots rather than pontifications from on high. While the contributions do not lack ideological fervour, they nonetheless produce practical steps to deal with many of the problems considered. I cannot say that I completely agreed with some of the contributions but that is rather the point, to challenge the reader and stimulate what is often lacking in our contemporary politics – a real debate about the most important, not the most convenient issues.

Parliament Street has become an important part of the wider Conservative family and this publication emphasises one of its most important aspects – that the British Conservative movement has traditionally been a wide coalition of interests. The Conservative party has been electorally stronger when it represents a wider, rather than a narrower, spectrum of views and "Smart Government" is a timely reminder of this.

The Rt. Hon. Liam Fox M.P.

Member of Parliament for North Somerset and former Secretary of State for Defence