



FreedomFest – a serious affair in the City of Freedom

Exclusive: Lord Monckton explains why a Las Vegas would never fly in Great Britain

By Lord Christopher Monckton
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LAS VEGAS, Nev. – All the great voices of freedom were at this year's FreedomFest in Las Vegas. The Heartland Institute (which had held its own successful climate conference just a few days beforehand); the Heritage Foundation; the Cato Institute; the Mises Institute; the Free State Project; and a host of others.

There was even an organization clamoring for the establishment of one of my own favorite ideas: an elected international body (that would be a first) to replace the United Nations. It would be called the United Democracies, and only democratic nations would have the right to participate.

There were plenty of people selling gold and silver coins as a costly but probably prudent hedge against the further inflation and collapse of the once-mighty dollar.

To a Brit, the choice was at once bewildering and exciting. Across the pond, we have the Institute of Economic Affairs, the Adam Smith Institute, the Freedom Association and – well, that's just about it. What need has an unconsidered satrapy of the European tyranny-by-clerk for institutes devoted to liberty, when the nation's elected representatives have betrayed it by handing over their powers – our powers – by stealth to the unelected *Kommissars* of Brussels?

Truth is, we need freedom, for we lack it even more than the United States does – which was why it was a great honor for me to be allowed to address a heavily attended panel at FreedomFest in Las Vegas.

The mood of the delegates was serious, for freedom is a serious affair when it is now so greatly under threat from “Democrat” administrations that are democratic in name only, and when more and more power is concentrated in the hands of a few all-powerful supranational entities whom no one elects.

To me, Las Vegas has become a symbol of the freedom you still enjoy in the United States – a freedom we have perhaps never had, and that we certainly do not have today.

Imagine a consortium proposing to build a new casino in London and applying to the bureaucracy for zoning consent. The conversation might go something like this.

Don Corleone: The boys want to set up a casino in London.

Sir Humphrey Appleby: We couldn't possibly allow it. There are too many casinos in London already.

The Don: But surely that's a commercial decision for us. If we make a loss, it's our loss, not yours.

Sir Humphrey: But you want it to look like a giant Egyptian pyramid. We can't have one of those in London. It would be contrary to the vulgarity presumption in the zoning laws.

The Don: But you granted consent for that ugly, stained-concrete slab – what do you call it? – the Royal Festival Hole.

Sir Humphrey: But that was the thrusting, new architecture. We can't have you harking back several thousand years to the Egyptian Old Kingdom. This is Cool Britannia, you know, not the steam age. And besides, you want to just let people walk in off the street and start gambling, and we're certainly not going to allow that.

The Don: Well, what do you want us to do? Get them to sign a register and come back a couple of days later?

Sir Humphrey: Yes, that will do nicely. But you really can't have a pyramid.

The Don: Well, how about a Walt Disney version of a medieval castle? That would remind people of their heritage. We could call it the Excalibur, if you like.

Sir Humphrey (shuddering): Certainly not! Why can't you adapt an existing building?

The Don (grinning): You mean, like, a church?

Sir Humphrey: No, no, no. That wouldn't do at all. All those women bishops would shriek at us. It would contravene the ecclesiastical protocols of the established church. Perhaps you could take over one of the banks and adapt it?

The Don: We own the banks already. Besides, we need a new building so that – for instance – we can pump oxygen into the casino to make people feel good and place bigger bets.

Sir Humphrey: Can't do that. Health and safety regulations.

The Don: Well, we can always give the punters free drinks instead.

Sir Humphrey: Out of the question. Inducements to gamble are against the licensing acts.

The Don: Perhaps we could make the casino look like one of your ugly tower blocks, and name it after one of your colonies. The Mandalay Bay, perhaps.

Sir Humphrey: Yes, yes, perhaps that might be acceptable. There'd be the matter of my facilitation fee, of course.

The Don: Do you take credit cards? Or would you prefer payment in kind? I have a spare headless horse I could give you. You could sell it to the French for meat. They'd give you a good price.

Sir Humphrey: No need for that. You can give me some points in the casino.

The Don: Agreed. I knew we could reach a happy compromise.

Both (singing): "On the road to Mandalay,
Where the flying fishes play,
And the dawn comes up like thunder
Out of China 'cro-o-oss the bay!"

Moral: You could never have a city like Las Vegas in Britain. There are too many laws, regulations, ordinances and busybodies in the way, determined that we shall not be free. And that's a pity. Much to my surprise, I liked the place, precisely because it was a free-spirited free city in a free country, where everything seems possible.