**Handout 2: Why the New Right advocates rolling back the state**

It is the neo-liberal strand of the New Right which advocates rolling back the state. By this they mean, seeking to minimise the state’s intervention in the economy.

Neo-liberalism is principled rather than pragmatic because it has faith in human reason and hence in theory. As Thatcher said, ‘No U-turns – the lady’s not for turning’ (1981 Tory Party Conference. Thatcher’s ideological defence of her radical, neo-liberal, change in the face of critics in and out of her party).

Neo-liberalism is, above all, rooted in the belief that free-market capitalism promotes economic well-being in that it is self-regulating, and it serves as a form of social discipline, imposing economic constraints upon the working class. This *laissez-faire* or libertarian position also reflects a deep fear of the state based on the perceived threat it poses to individual rights, particularly property rights, and its tendency towards growth and excessive power.

What is new about New Right conservatism is that, to its neo-liberal, laissez-faire economic dimension, it has added a political, social and moral authoritarian dimension in all non-economic spheres. This does not derive from the paternalism of Disraeli but from earlier, reactionary and highly disciplinarian school of organic conservatism espoused by, for example, nineteenth century French writer Joseph de Maistre. This has been labelled ‘neo-conservatism’.



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| **Define ‘pragmatism’ and explain why Tories value it.** |
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| **Why do New Right neo-liberals reject pragmatism?** |
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