

The ultimate goal of a great statesman in a democratic society is the maximizing of freedom for the maximum number of people.

One of the things the good professor emphasized to us captivated students was that **a politician and a statesman are not the same thing.**

A statesman, Dr. Fears argues, is not a tyrant; he is the free leader of a free people and **s/he must possess four critical qualities:**

1. A bedrock of principles
2. A moral compass
3. A vision
4. The ability to build a consensus to achieve that vision

Let us now explore these four criteria of a democratic statesman in greater depth.

1. A Bedrock of Principles

The statesman builds his platform on a foundation of firm, unchanging, fundamental truths. These are the things he believes at his very core, his overarching philosophy. Just as in the foundation of a house, storms may buffet the structure, opposition and challenges may arise, times will change, but the foundation remains. A statesman may change the details of his policies and his methods for achieving those policies, but only inasmuch as those short-term tactics of expediency serve the purpose of furthering his bedrock of principles in the long run.

2. A Moral Compass

Dr. Fears argues that the modern politician makes decisions by using “antennae.” He puts his feelers out there to gauge the public mood. Once he figures out which way the wind is blowing, he then shapes himself and his message to give the people exactly what they want. But as Dr. Fears would hammer home again and again to us: **A statesman does not govern by public opinion polls.**

No, the true statesman makes his decisions by following the dictates of his own moral compass. He is not a relativist; he believes in absolute truths, and his moral compass is rooted in a sense of absolute right and absolute wrong. When something is wrong, he plainly says it is wrong and does everything in his power to fight against it.

When something is right, he is willing to overcome any opposition to preserve and spread it. The statesman is ambitious—he must be to obtain a position of power—but there are things he simply will and will not do to get to the top. He is a man of integrity; he speaks the truth. He leads by moral authority and represents all that is best in his countrymen.

3. A Vision

A statesman has a clear vision of what his country and his people can become. He knows where he wants to take them and what it will take to get there.

Dr. Fears argues that a statesman's foresight is one of his most important qualities, as he must be able to recognize problems on the horizon and be able to come up with solutions that are good not only for the short-term, but for the long-term as well. The statesman keeps in mind not only the here and now, but the world future generations will inherit.

4. The Ability to Build a Consensus to Achieve That Vision

A politician may have a bedrock of principles, a moral compass, and a vision, but if he lacks the ability to build a consensus around his vision, his efforts to change policies, laws, and the course of history will largely be in vain.

A statesman, who again is a free leader of a free people, must enlist those who serve with him in the government to support his initiatives, and their willingness to do so rests on the pressure they feel from their constituents to align themselves with the statesman's vision. Thus, a statesman's success in building a consensus ultimately hinges on his ability to convince his countrymen of the soundness of his philosophy.

To win their hearts, the statesman does not use slick advertisements and PR campaigns. **Ads and propaganda, Fears argues, are the tools of the despot.** Rather, the statesman harnesses the power of the written, and especially the spoken word. He is master orator. His lifelong study of great books and the lessons of history allow him to speak to the people in intelligent, potent, well-reasoned arguments.

Because a statesman follows his moral compass instead of opinion polls, his ideas are often initially out of step with the public mood. But instead of tailoring his rhetoric to that mood, **he speaks to the very best within his countrymen.** He understands that while their ideals may be deeply buried, powerful rhetoric can bring them forth and activate them. The strength of his words comes from the fact that he actually believes what he says. And he does not make his countrymen's hearts soar and burn with empty promises; he keeps his word and does what he says he will do.

In considering these four qualities of a democratic statesman, it may seem like a real one has never existed, because if one had, surely everyone would be in agreement on his exalted place in history. But in truth, even those who agree on these criteria would have plenty of disagreement over what principles the statesman should espouse, what constitutes a moral right and wrong, and most importantly, what constitutes acceptable means in obtaining his vision.

Dr. Fears believes that the three greatest statesmen in history are Pericles of Athens, Abraham Lincoln, and Winston Churchill. For all three men, their bedrock of principles rested on the ideal of freedom: democratic liberty, equality under the law, and individual freedom—the freedom to live as you choose.

And these men had a vision of expanding this liberty further, out to the common man. And yet they all courted controversy in some of the measures they deemed necessary in order to achieve their vision. Churchill is criticized for things like the Bombing of Dresden and his advocacy of imperialism (*he did not believe that national independence and freedom were the same thing and thought that British colonists would have more freedom and liberty under colonial rule than if a country was turned over to a small clique of its own that would rule with tyranny*). And Lincoln suspended the right to habeas corpus during the Civil War.

Some feel that such actions cannot be justified, no matter the end goal. But Dr. Fears, who from what I gather from his lectures and books leans libertarian, sees the broader picture—he argues that every statesman must set priorities, and this can sometimes mean “saying no to the aspirations of one people for another.” In other words, even if the methods of the statesmen he admires were not always very savory in the short-term, what matters most in his estimation is that they ultimately led to more freedom for more people in the long-term.

So who do you personally think are the great statesmen from history? Do you think there are true statesmen among us now? If not, which of these qualities are the politicians out there lacking?

A statesman cannot be a tyrant, which all too often a politician is. In contrast a statesman is the free leader of a free people.

It has been said that there are four qualities found in a true statesman, and without these attributes the word great will not apply.

- A statesman should be a man who lives by his principles
- A statesman must have a moral compass and it must guide him down his life’s path
- It is not enough to have principles guided by morality, but he must have a vision for what he would like the future to look like
- Even a man/woman with principles, morality and a vision cannot dictate that vision to those around him. He must be willing to achieve his goals only through consensus and not fiat.

Lastly, a great statesman must put these four qualities into a package in which he shows the qualities of leadership to win over supporters and constituents who might be taking a road against the tide.

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