

Iain Duncan Smith

Former Leader of the Conservative Party and Former Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

Rt. Hon. Iain Duncan Smith MP is a revered and influential British politician who has held numerous high-ranking positions within U.K. government. Best-known for his service as the former leader of the Conservative Party, opposed to Prime Minister Tony Blair, and as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in Prime Minister David Cameron's cabinet, Duncan Smith now serves as Chairman of the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ). Duncan Smith founded the Centre, an independent think-tank dedicated to promoting policy recommendations that tackle the root causes of poverty and social breakdown, in 2004. In 2016, he resigned from his post as Secretary of State at DWP in protest of the level of cuts to be imposed on disability benefits in David Cameron's Conservative-led coalition government, and resumed the post of Chairman of the CSJ. In the aftermath of the European Union Referendum of 2016, Duncan Smith has emerged as one of the earliest and most vocal Euroskeptics to suggest a withdrawal from the European Union or Brexit, a position he has held since 2001. He is also a firm believer in the need to curb the role of the state in public life and that taxes should be sharply reduced.

Throughout his six years as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Duncan Smith undertook the most significant program of welfare reform in modern times, transforming the benefit and pension systems as well as employment services and support. Perhaps the most significant reforms were the introduction of Universal Credit and the Work Programme, bringing together private and voluntary sectors to help the unemployed, and the introduction of the Single Tier Pension.

Duncan Smith was elected leader of the Conservative Party in 2001 by capturing roughly 61-percent of votes cast. This victory was especially remarkable as among the five candidates he alone had never before served as a government minister. Duncan Smith had formerly served as Shadow Secretary of State for Defence and as Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.

Duncan Smith's storied career in public service began in 1992 when he was elected as a Member of Parliament for the re-drawn constituency of Chingford and Woodford Green. In 1997, when Conservatives lost power, he was appointed the party's official spokesman on social security by Former Leader of the House of Commons William Hague.