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# Time to privatise the courts [1]

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Britain's Ministry of Justice is considering "wholesale privatization" of the courts and tribunal service. Quite right too. Anyone who has seen the country's courts in action knows how inefficient they are, to the frustration of all who use them. That is because they are a monopoly, and monopolies do not have to please their customers ? in this case, not just the public who use them but the taxpayers who fund them.

The Adam Smith Institute advocated privatization of the court system decades ago in its Omega Report and the replacement of civil courts with a system of arbitration. Some of this has been started, falteringly. It is time to bring a new, privatised vision to the sector.

The legal profession more generally needs reform too. Its trade union and its standards bodies are pretty much the same thing. Again, it is a closed shop. While the ability to represent people in court has been opened up somewhat, the monopoly remains, just as it does in medicine. Let us hope that the Ministry of Justice's proposals have a clear vision of how we can deliver justice in a more modern way, more competitively, more cheaply and at a higher standard. That is what privatisation usually does.

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