

[Malcolm McAlpine RIP](#) [1]

Written by [Dr Eamonn Butler](#) [2] | Thursday 19 May 2011



Our friend and supporter Malcolm McAlpine died this week at the age of 93 after a brief illness. Malcolm was President of Sir Robert McAlpine, the construction company which just last month completed the building of the Olympic stadium for the 2012 games. The company is very much a family-run partnership; he was the grandson of the company's founder, Sir Robert, and many other family members are involved.

We came to know Malcolm in the late 1970s as we strived to build up the Adam Smith Institute. A great believer in personal and economic freedom ? and in the tendency of governments and regulators to mess things up ? he was one of our earliest subscribers. Around 1983, when the Thatcher government looked as if it was running out of ideas, we went to him with a proposal to produce a report on every department of government, outlining precisely what it should do in order to achieve the free-market, liberal vision. It would involve twenty working parties of politicians, civil servants, academics, professionals and journalists. He told us that we were too small and too poorly organised, and he did not believe we could do the project, which we called the Omega Project. But we did it anyway, and Malcolm asked me over to his office to apologise for his lack of faith in us ? and handed me a large personal cheque by way of apology.

He continued to give us support and advice through good times and bad, and was particularly supportive of our extensive programme of work with young people, particularly our Next Generation Group, our sixth-form seminar ISOS, and our Young Writer on Liberty prize.

Malcolm was a very straight talker who left you in no doubt when he thought you were doing something wrong, but would be the first to pick up the phone and praise you when you pulled off something significant. He was also surprisingly modest and amazingly energetic, coming to ASI seminars and dinners ? and participating actively in them ? right up to a few months ago. He was a good friend, and we will miss him.

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