

# MOTIONS CARRIED AT THE LIBERAL PARTY SPECIAL ASSEMBLY JUNE 24<sup>th</sup> 2017

## **Motion 1 – Wealth Equality**

“The Liberal Party notes that a recent Resolution Foundation report on inequality has found that wealth is distributed far more unequally than earnings or household income. A tenth of adults own about half of the nation’s wealth, while 1% own at least 14% of the total. By contrast, 15% of adults in the UK have either no share of the nation’s record wealth, or have negative wealth.

In the face of dangerously growing inequality of ownership, the Liberal Party makes renewed calls for the positive redistribution of unearned inherited wealth including land and business assets, to be achieved by the gradual introduction of a UK Universal Inheritance for all qualifying UK citizens at 25, financed and clawed back from the more fortunate by a progressive Accessions Tax on cumulative lifetime total receipt of capital gifts and bequests. This would help repay student loans, reduce poverty, help business start-ups and increase home ownership in each new generation.”

## **Motion 2 – Party Policy Management**

It was noted during the general election campaign the media were able to detract from our positive and key policy messages by focusing on some aged policies.

As it is not practicable to update all policy documents within a standard 5 year term of government, this special assembly grants delegated powers to the NEC to:

- a) To arrange a review and if necessary remove any policies not passed or updated within the last 5 years to be determined at an annual assembly or special assembly  
**Carried**
  
- b) With immediate effect rescind the Liberal Party’s support for Esperanto. **Carried**

## **Constitutional Amendment a)**

Constitution Point 3

*Delete* "It looks forward to a world in which all peoples live together in peace under an effective and democratically constituted World Authority"

*Insert* It looks to strengthen world governance and justice by developing and supporting the United Nations (which has a broader democratic system less subject to the restrictive influence of super states) with the aim of creating a society;

## **Constitutional Amendment b)**

*Delete* in current point 3

to supporting and strengthening the United Nations, to working steadfastly for the eventual abolition of national armies and armaments, to co-operating with other countries to build a United Europe and

Amended paragraph would now read:

It looks to strengthen world governance and justice by developing and supporting the United Nations (which has a broader democratic system less subject to the restrictive influence of super states) with the aim of creating a fairer society; in which all peoples are able to enjoy continuous access to the Earth's environment and natural resources; in which the various cultures of humanity can develop freely without being warped by nationalist, racial or religious antagonism; and in which the free movement of ideas, of people and of goods is guaranteed to the benefit of all. To these ends it sees this country as committed to making a special effort together with richer nations towards assisting that part humanity whose essential freedoms are denied by poverty and hunger. It welcomes the establishment of links with other countries insofar as such groupings advance these Liberal aims.

### **Motion 3 - Privatised Water**

The Liberal Party notes with dismay that in June 2017 Thames Water was fined again, this time for the maximum fine allowed, for a persistent and unacceptable failure to reduce and control leaks.

This fine is the fifth fine in just over two years. Thames Water was fined last year for the repeated and deliberate discharge of raw sewage into the Grand Union Canal. Later in the year Thames Water were fined again for discharging sewage in an area of outstanding natural beauty in the Cotswolds. Subsequently Thames Water was fined £20.3 million after intentionally and frequently discharging a massive amount of over 1.4 billion litres of raw sewage into the Thames over more than two years.

Thames Water made a profit of £742 million last year and paid out £82 million in dividends to share-holders. Thames Water Directors cynically operate on the immoral basis that - "It is cheaper to pay fines than it is to comply with sewage control regulations." In imposing a record fine of £20.3 million this practice was condemned by Judge Francis Sheridan who said - "It should not be cheaper to offend than to take appropriate precautions". The reaction of Thames Water to, what Judge Sheridan condemned as, "a shocking and disgraceful state of affairs", has been, and continues to be, to take consolation in the fact that Thames Water makes a profit of over £2 million per day and the latest penalty, although a record fine, can be paid off within ten days operation. The Directors incur no penalties. No Director has been sentenced to imprisonment. No Director has paid a fine. The fines are paid by the long-suffering Thames Water customers in the form of increased charges. The Government has been reluctant to take action because Thames Water is permanently up for sale and consequently changes hands frequently. Asset strippers move in, extract profits, ignore water purity regulations, and then sell on to another predator. At the moment Thames Water is owned by a consortium of institutional investors, including funds from China and Abu Dhabi, and until recently was managed by Macquarie Capital Funds, which has just sold its stake to Kuwaiti and Canadian investors. The demoralised and conscientious water engineers who work for Thames Water seek a restoration of professional standards and an end to asset stripping and financial exploitation.

The Thames Water Directors demonstrate they are exclusively profit-oriented and have no long-term commitment to the water industry as a public service. They take tax evasion tactics by using off-shore tax havens in order to enhance profits. Opinion polls confirm that a majority of citizens regard the privatisation of water as a failure and as an expensive mistake.

The Liberal Party recognise the error in judgement of allowing profiteers to manage our essential and critical water service and call upon government to take action to bring the Thames Water holdings back into public ownership, with local democratic accountability, at a discounted valuation which will take account of the excessive profits that have been siphoned-off since privatisation.

#### **Motion 4 - Hydraulic Fracturing (Fracking)**

The Liberal Party condemns the governments manifesto pledge to fast track Fracking through calls for legislation to be introduced to change planning law for shale gas applications to allow Non-fracking drilling to be treated as permitted development and when necessary, major shale planning decisions to be made the responsibility of the National Planning Regime. This represent an affront to local democracy and a removal of rights expected as part of regional devolution efforts.

Further a plan to set up a new Shale Environmental Regulator, who will assume the relevant functions of the Health and Safety Executive, the Environment Agency and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, smack of 'appointing a tame controller to expedite government will. This will be another example of a regulatory body that has no power to prevent severe breaches of regulations other than levy a token sum fine on those who choose to ignore regulation when the cost of complying exceeds the likely cost of the fine.

Finally, the suggested changes to the proposed Shale Wealth Fund which will make a greater percentage of the tax revenues from shale gas directly benefit the communities that host the extraction sites. This represents at best a cynical attempt to bribe the general public and local authorities who consistently say No to fracking, and especially so when many of the fracking companies will use multi-company structures to ensure profits are minimised and/or offshore companies to avoid tax.

The Liberal Party calls for a moratorium on all Fracking activities in the UK and calls upon government to take the actions necessary to buy back allocated PEDLs. It further calls on the government to legislate to prevent members of the house of commons and the house of lords with vested interests in Fracking from lobbying, speaking or voting on matters relating to Fracking.

#### **Motion 5 - EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS AND SMALL BUSINESSES**

The Liberal Party notes with a degree of concern the disproportionate administrative and legal burden placed on small businesses.

Further, the Liberal Party considers that rather than protecting employees' rights these burdens act as an incentive to employ casual, agency or zero hours staff with little if any employment rights or protection, or indeed not to employ any additional staff at all.

As a modest step to alleviating the regulatory burden on small businesses, but whilst recognising the substance of employment law and the protection it affords, the Liberal

Party calls for the law to be changed to the effect that employees would have to prove the 'materiality' of any procedural breaches of the law relating to their employment status in order to successfully establish liability against an employer, where that employer is a small business which employs less than 20 people.

In simple terms an employee in such circumstances must additionally demonstrate that any procedural breach had a material or causative effect upon the actions taken, for example, their redundancy or dismissal.

Where a breach is shown to be 'material' or to have had a 'causative' effect then the employees' rights remain unaffected.

# STATEMENTS CARRIED AT THE LIBERAL PARTY SPECIAL ASSEMBLY JUNE 24<sup>th</sup> 2017

## **Statement - Grenfell Tower Fire**

The Liberal Party recognises that the tragic events of the Grenfell Tower fire have had a profound effect on the nation and have cast a dark shadow coming so soon after recent terrorist atrocities.

The tragedy has highlighted the contrasts in living standards of the most affluent and those less fortunate, the pressures on social housing and the compelling issue of the way councils have cut back on building control and safety checks.

Wealth cannot continue to be hoarded by the most affluent, whilst the majority continue to feel the weight of austerity and the party calls for a modest redistribution of wealth to create an opportunity society.

The fallout from the Grenfell Tower fire has in a most painful public way shown the gulf that continues in the ownership of wealth in our society. This disparity must be addressed, so that in the words of the Liberal Party constitution every citizen shall possess liberty, property and security.

## **Statement – June 2017 General Election**

The Liberal Party NEC would like to extend a sincere thank you to its 4 candidates in the recent general election, and to its supports and the local activists who supported their campaigns.

The party's President Steve Radford secured third place in Liverpool West Derby, whilst the party ran candidates in Altrincham and Sale West, Devon Central, and Thirsk and Malton.

The results of a hastily called general election have now left the country with the prospects of a period of uncertainty on the eve of the commencement of negotiations on this countries exit from the EU.

The outcome of the election exposes the fact that the first past the post electoral system does not prevent minority governments but leads to minority governments being dependent on small minorities whilst not being representative of the whole country but which are highly concentrated in specific areas.

This election once again gives ample justification for introducing proportional representation and empowering all voters equally, irrespective of whether they live in a marginal or safe seat.

### **Statement - Domestic Energy – Price Cap**

The Liberal Party notes the recent debate on the imposition of a price cap in the domestic energy market to control prices.

The imposition of such controls risks energy companies prematurely increasing prices in anticipation of controls being enforced, as well as reducing long-term investment to maintain profits margins.

The UK energy market lacks both an effective regulator willing to act to force energy companies to promptly pass on falls in whole sale energy prices, as well as encouragement for better price competition.

Many options to introduce competition to the markets exist, but the current regime offers little chance for local communities to take a stake in the market.

For instance in Germany energy cooperatives are a major player in renewable energy, where almost 50% of renewable power capacity is domestically owned.

The Liberal Party sees merit in such an approach as it both empowers local communities and reduces our long-term dependency on fossil fuels.

### **Statement – 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Occupation of the West Bank**

The Liberal Party wishes to acknowledge the 60th anniversary of the occupation of the West Bank.

The culmination of the Israeli states expansion and consolidation has not been followed by any meaningful act of reconciliation or concession to being magnanimous in victory.

A fully democratic state, Israel has constantly denied the Palestinians the right to self-determination and statehood and instead condemned them to decades of subjugation and dependency. The Gaza strip has seen an economic blockage of unprecedented severity which has imposed levels of unimaginable poverty and depravation.

The weight of political opinion suggests the Israeli state has all but abandoned a two state solution to concentrate on the de facto absorption of Jerusalem and the West bank without any clear statement of how its Palestinian population will be accommodated.

The Liberal Party re-iterates its call for the British Government to actively and urgently promote Palestine's entry into the United Nations as a full member and to propose that an invitation to join the Commonwealth be extended to Palestine immediately.

### **Statement - Terror Attack – Manchester**

The Liberal Party responds with shock and great sadness at the recent terrorist atrocity in Manchester and offers its deepest sympathies to all those affected.

An attack which targeted children and parents as they left a music concert lacks any justification or purpose, other than wanton mayhem and destruction for its own evil ends.

The Liberal Party maintains that dialogue and early intervention remains our nation's surest safeguard against the evolving domestic terrorist threat. Those most at risk of radicalisation need to be identified and brought back into the mainstream as a matter of priority.

Although the small scale deployment of troops on the streets of the UK may appear a prudent step, they should not distract from the more important work of the police, the security services and communities themselves to curtail further such atrocities.

### **Statement - EU Citizens in the UK**

The Liberal Party notes the recent comments of the European Council President Donald Tusk on the future status of EU citizens in the UK in relation to the commencement of talks on BREXIT.

The party fully supports the rights of EU citizens to continue living and working in this country and believes making such an undertaking does not prejudice future negotiations with the EU if made in good faith.

The party believes in a fair settlement with the European Union as part of our disengagement from Europe, but remains concerned about any excessively large demand for financial compensation as part of the final settlement.

The EU should respect that the UK proportionally pays more for the defence of the Europe through NATO than the EU countries do themselves and this disparity should be off set in any negotiations.

There remains a real possibility that a punitive sum will push the UK towards an unfavourable exit which is not in the long-term interests of either the UK or mainland Europe.

### **Statement – Syrian Civil War**

The Liberal Party deplores the rapid escalation of violence in Syria after the alleged use of chemical warfare agents in Northern Syria and the subsequent punitive US attack on Syria government forces.

The countries civil war has now dragged on for 6 years, interspersed with civilian atrocities and widespread destruction on the ground displacing an estimated 3.8 million civilians and leading to approximately 100000 deaths.

The increased direct involvement of the Russian government, and attempts by Western powers to back a disparate array of opposition group has led to a chaotic situation where civilians are seemingly targeted at will. It has also added to regional instability and allowed Islamic militant groups to exploit the breakdown in order to further their own extremist agenda's.

The Liberal Party urgently calls for the warring factions to resume direct talks at the earliest possible time under the auspices of the United Nations to end the un-necessary suffering of the regions people who simply wish to live lives free from violence and suffering.

As a first step we propose the creation of safe zones to remove innocent civilians from the danger of armed conflict, which on occasions has constituted genocide against the largely Sunni opposition population