

# **MOTIONS PASSED AT THE**

## **124<sup>TH</sup> LIBERAL ASSEMBLY**

**HELD ON SATURDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2009**

**AT THE FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE, WOLVERHAMPTON**

### **'Drink Driving' Limits**

Assembly notes that at the 2008 assembly a motion was passed calling for the legal blood alcohol level for those driving to be reduced to zero.

Assembly notes that this was neither the intention nor the spirit of the original motion as drafted and published, and that, further, the final motion was arrived at by allowing amendments to be taken from the floor during the debate itself.

After a period of reflection assembly rejects that contention that the legal limit for blood alcohol when driving should be zero and is content with existing legislation

### **Mobile Phones and Driving**

Assembly notes with great concern the amount of people who use mobile 'phones for calls and texting whilst driving.

Assembly calls on H.M. Government to urgently consider raising the penalties for using hand held mobile whilst driving.

### **US Presidential Elections**

Assembly welcomes the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States and congratulates the citizens of the United States. Liberals can once again feel comfortable with the emphasis which is being given by US government to issues of equality, governance and freedom in both their domestic and foreign policy.

## **Multiple Elections**

Assembly notes that existing Liberal Party policy is to call for all elections to be held on one 'democracy' day, and that this day should be a bank holiday.

Whilst the Liberal Party remains committed to increasing participation in elections and the electoral process assembly feels that holding elections to all tiers of Government on the same day is bad for democracy in general and local democracy in particular. Amongst other difficulties the Liberal Party believes that where different elections are held on the same day important local and regional issues become engulfed in the national campaigns of political parties.

Assembly thus calls for elections to each tier of government to be held on a specific and separate day.

## **Electoral Reform**

Assembly believes that, notwithstanding its expressed opinions about the use of referenda the time may now be right to allow the public at the next General Election to express their views on the electoral system, by being offered a voting paper on electoral reform at the time that they are engaged in using the first past the post system for the election of their Member of Parliament.

## **Photographs on Ballot Papers**

The Liberal Party calls for provision to be made to allow a photograph of a candidate on an election ballot paper should the candidate concerned request it.

# **The BBC**

Assembly believes that the BBC serves an important role in presenting impartial news and commentary on both domestic and foreign events. Its foreign broadcasting services are highly valued in those countries where the publication of news is restricted by government censorship. We believe that it is essential that the BBC retains its independence and that those who work for it should not allow excessive financial reward to invite calls for government intervention to secure financial economy.

## **Leasehold Reform**

Assembly believes that the position in which many owners of flats are in is literally feudal.

Whilst having all the responsibilities of property owners, they have to pay ground rent to people whose only interest in their flats is financial. In the worse cases, where leaseholders control services, the fees are sometimes unjust and even extortionate. In all cases coming to the end of a lease means that the value of a flat is much reduced.

Despite Labour's commitment in 1995 to abolish long term low rent leasehold, the only progress is cautious reform where 50% or more of leaseholders in a development can go to arbitration to buy their collective leaseholds and sell them off to individual flat owners.

Assembly believes that this right should be available to individual owners of flats.

# Transport

This Assembly reaffirms its commitment to a public ownership national transport system. This would mean placing key rail and bus or coach operations under the same management and using cross ticketing and interavailability of tickets. We believe this is the way forward to an integrated transport network.

# Pensions

Assembly notes with grave concern the numbers of pensioners suffering real and relative poverty. Despite Government promises of cleaning up the financial sector, it (the financial sector) continues to award bonuses to managers, rewarding failure instead of achievement.

Assembly asks the NEC to set up a working group to look at the possibility of a universal tax free pension or other alternatives to redress the imbalance, restore fairness to the system and take all pensioners out of the poverty trap.

Assembly notes that vast numbers of pensioners do not take up the ever increasing tax credits and benefits.

Assembly believes that this burdensome scheme of means testing is disingenuous to senior citizens and causes unnecessary expenditure on administration.

Assembly endorses our policy of taking more people out of the tax benefits scheme trap by calling for all incomes below £12,000 be tax free as the most cost effective and equitable way to assist senior citizens and low paid alike

# Europe and the European Union

This Assembly affirms that the United Kingdom is a European nation, and that both trade and co-operation with other European nations is good for the United Kingdom.

This Assembly reaffirms the Liberal Party's position on Europe, specifically that:

- (a) we oppose the introduction of the Lisbon Treaty without it having first been put to the electorate of the United Kingdom by way of a referendum;
- (b) We believe the recent expansion and any further enlargement of the EU would be better served by a more flexible approach whereby countries may adopt those economic, social, home affairs/justice systems, immigration, foreign and taxation policies they believe are best appropriate to them whilst maintaining core trade and polices and democratic institutions.
- (c) we oppose the replacement of Sterling with the Euro for the currency of the United Kingdom;
- (d) we believe that reform of the European Union is a necessary requirement of the United Kingdom remaining in the European Union. That will require an ongoing campaign to remove the EU's democratic deficit and its lax attitude, towards financial systems, that fails to give an impression that fraud and corruption is being dealt with. We need a devolved and diverse EU that exists for all of the people and all of the peoples in Europe instead of a Union that allows a political elite to control Europe for its own ends.

and

- (e) we believe in free trade which should not be limited to the member nations of the EU.

This Assembly notes the position of the European Parliament whereby only parties who are members of larger European groupings may fight future elections to the Parliament, and states its opposition to this position. However, whilst stating its opposition, this Assembly feels that the electorate should not be denied an opportunity to vote for EU-sceptic Liberal candidates, and calls upon the NEC to make links with other Liberal Parties in Europe (both within and outside the European Union) who are not members of the ELDR and who share the ethos of the Liberal Party, in order to make such a grouping to fight future European Parliamentary elections.

## **TOPICAL MOTIONS**

### **‘The Observer’**

Assembly notes with alarm the recent reports of Guardian Media Group’s intention to close the world’s oldest Sunday newspaper, ‘The Observer’.

Assembly notes that too great a proportion of the news media is under the control of all too few proprietors.

Assembly therefore calls upon the Scott Trust to extend the same protection it is bound to afford to ‘The Guardian’ to ‘The Observer’ and reject the reported proposals. Assembly urges the Scott Trust to preserve ‘The Observer’ as an editorially independent Sunday newspaper.

## **EMERGENCY MOTIONS**

### **Showmens’ Grounds**

Glasgow will host the 2014 commonwealth games. The local authority have been engaged in the compulsory purchase of ‘privately owned’ showmens’ grounds to redevelop them for these games as well as redeveloping council owned showmens’ grounds. This policy is being pursued without adequate alternative showmens’ sites being offered. This assembly condemns this treatment of a proud British minority group contrary to, and in defiance of, the showmens’ natural human rights.

### **Tata Motors**

Assembly notes with concern statements from Tata motors issued on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2009 that whilst merging the West Midlands Jaguar/Land Rover operations onto one site will not result in cuts to the workforce, it will necessitate changes to the employee pension fund which will be damaging to benefits paid to future pensioners.

Assembly calls on Tata motors to maintain the existing pension provision.