

## Which party will care for the NHS and put my patients first?

**Our aim:** To make year-on-year improvements in the health of Britain's people and the quality of the National Health Service.

**The problem:** The NHS has been squeezed between rising demand and government underfunding, and disrupted by repeated changes in government policy. Morale amongst NHS professionals is falling, and bureaucracy has grown at the expense of front-line patient care, while numbers of nurses and hospital beds have fallen.

**Our commitment:** Liberal Democrats will increase funding for the NHS and secure funding for the future. We will maintain the NHS as a comprehensive service, free at the point of need and funded primarily from general taxation. We will immediately tackle the crisis in the hospital sector, make the NHS more accountable and begin a long term shift towards preventive medicine.

### Our priorities are to:

- Halt all finance driven closures for 6 months, pending an independent audit of needs and facilities.
- Invest £200 million each year to recruit more staff for front-line patient care. This would be enough, for example, for 10,000 extra nurses or 5,000 extra doctors.
- Cut hospital waiting lists to a maximum of 6 months over 3 years.
- End the two-tier system in the NHS.
- Restore free eye and dental checks.

### Raising standards in the NHS

Whilst many of the recent reforms to the NHS have been beneficial, they have resulted in the creation of a two-tier health service. The standard of health care a person receives is increasingly becoming a lottery. The length of time people have to wait, the chance of treatment being postponed and the quality of health care vary enormously from one part of the UK to another.

#### We will:

- **Match NHS facilities to needs.** We will place an immediate 6-month halt on the finance driven closure of beds and wards, and set up an independent audit of needs and facilities.
- **End the built-in two-tier service in the NHS.** We will end the present system where treatment depends on the type of GP people go to. We will treat all GPs equally, with a common basis for funding. We want all GPs to have the benefits of flexibility and access to services currently enjoyed by fundholders. Those who choose to manage their own affairs will be able to do so on their own or as part of a consortium. Those who do not will be able to leave management to the local health authority.
- **Raise standards of care in all areas.** We will set up a National Inspectorate for Health

and Social Care to improve standards and promote patients' interests. This body will work with the Audit Commission to ensure that all spending is monitored and results in real improvements in patient care.

### Funding the Health Service

The NHS is underfunded. Too much goes into bureaucracy and not enough into patient care. There is a crisis in the NHS, especially in hospitals. Morale is dropping, standards of care are at risk from underfunding and highly qualified doctors and nurses are leaving the profession.

#### We will:

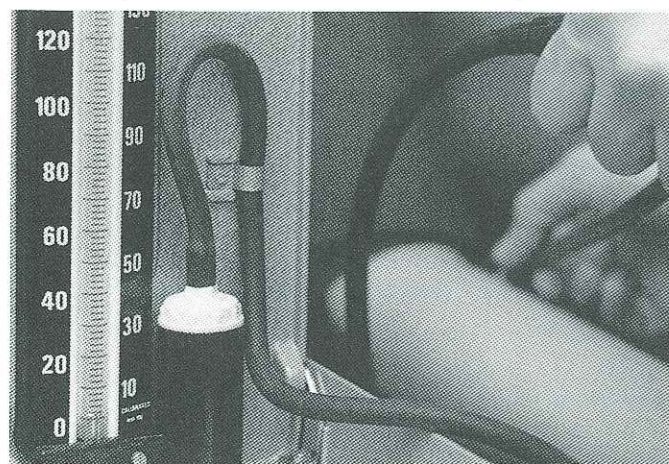
- **Invest more in the NHS.** We will invest at least an extra £540 million every year in the NHS to pay for our policy priorities. This will be paid for by closing the loophole that allows employers to avoid paying National Insurance contributions on certain benefits in kind and by putting 5p on the price of a packet of 20 cigarettes. We will use these extra funds to tackle the crisis in staffing, especially in the hospital sector, and begin a shift to preventive care. We will ensure that the NHS budget keeps pace with increasing cost pressures.
- **Shift money from unnecessary bureaucracy into patient care.** We will move from annual to at least three yearly contracts between Health Authorities and Trusts, and shift the money saved into front-line patient care. We will replace time consuming local pay bargaining with a new national pay structure and a single NHS-wide Pay Review Body that covers all pay, from the cleaner to the chief executive.

**Building on the best of the NHS**

The NHS needs to be strengthened and improved.

**We will:**

- **Cut waiting lists.** We will cut waiting times between diagnosis and treatment to a maximum of 6 months over 3 years.
- **Improve the quality of care and raise morale.** We will recruit and train more professional staff. Our carefully costed plans would, for instance, pay for the equivalent of 10,000 more nurses or 5,000 more doctors. We will ban the use of 'gagging clauses' in employment contracts which prevent professional staff from speaking out against unsafe standards.
- **Tackle the crisis in NHS dental care.** We will require local authorities to ensure that the public has access to NHS dentistry in all areas.

**Promoting good health**

Britain has a health service that concentrates too much on curing illness rather than preventing it. A healthier nation and a more cost-effective NHS depend on shifting the emphasis towards prevention, tackling the root causes of ill health (e.g. poverty and homelessness) and making people more responsible for their own health.

**We will:**

- **Make prevention a priority.** We will immediately abolish charges for eye and dental check-ups and freeze prescription charges as the first steps in a radical shift of policy that emphasises the prevention of illness rather than treatment.
- **Encourage people to take more responsibility for their own health.** We will improve health education and promote healthy living. We will ban tobacco advertising and promotion and increase the duty on tobacco products. We will make the Health Education Authority truly independent and free to criticise government policy.
- **Ensure that food is healthy and safe.** We will create an independent and powerful Food Commission, separate from MAFF, and responsible to Parliament for food quality and safety.
- **Put health promotion at the heart of government policy.** We will require all government departments to assess the impact of their policies on health. Each year there will be an independent report, to be published and debated in Parliament, on the state of the nation's health.

**Bringing health services closer to people**

The local institutions of the NHS must become more accountable to those they serve and more responsive to patients' needs.

**We will:**

- **Enable citizens to play a part in setting health policies in their area.** We will build on current pilot schemes to bring together Health Authorities and Social Services Departments, within the framework of elected local authorities.
- **Give local people a stronger voice on NHS Trusts.** We will end the right of the Secretary

of State for Health to appoint members of NHS Trusts, Authorities and Boards. We will require at least half the membership of Trusts to be drawn from the population they serve. We will open up meetings of NHS Trust boards to the public and press, and give local people, staff and professionals speaking rights. We will guarantee direct representation from the staff of each Trust. We will give Community Health Councils improved rights to consultation and greater access to information and meetings.

- **Give the public more say in setting priorities within the NHS.** Difficult choices about priorities must be faced. They cannot be left to bureaucrats and health professionals alone. We will develop new ways of involving the public in setting health service priorities.

**Giving patients more choice**

Patients should have more choice over their type of treatment, who delivers it and when.

**We will:**

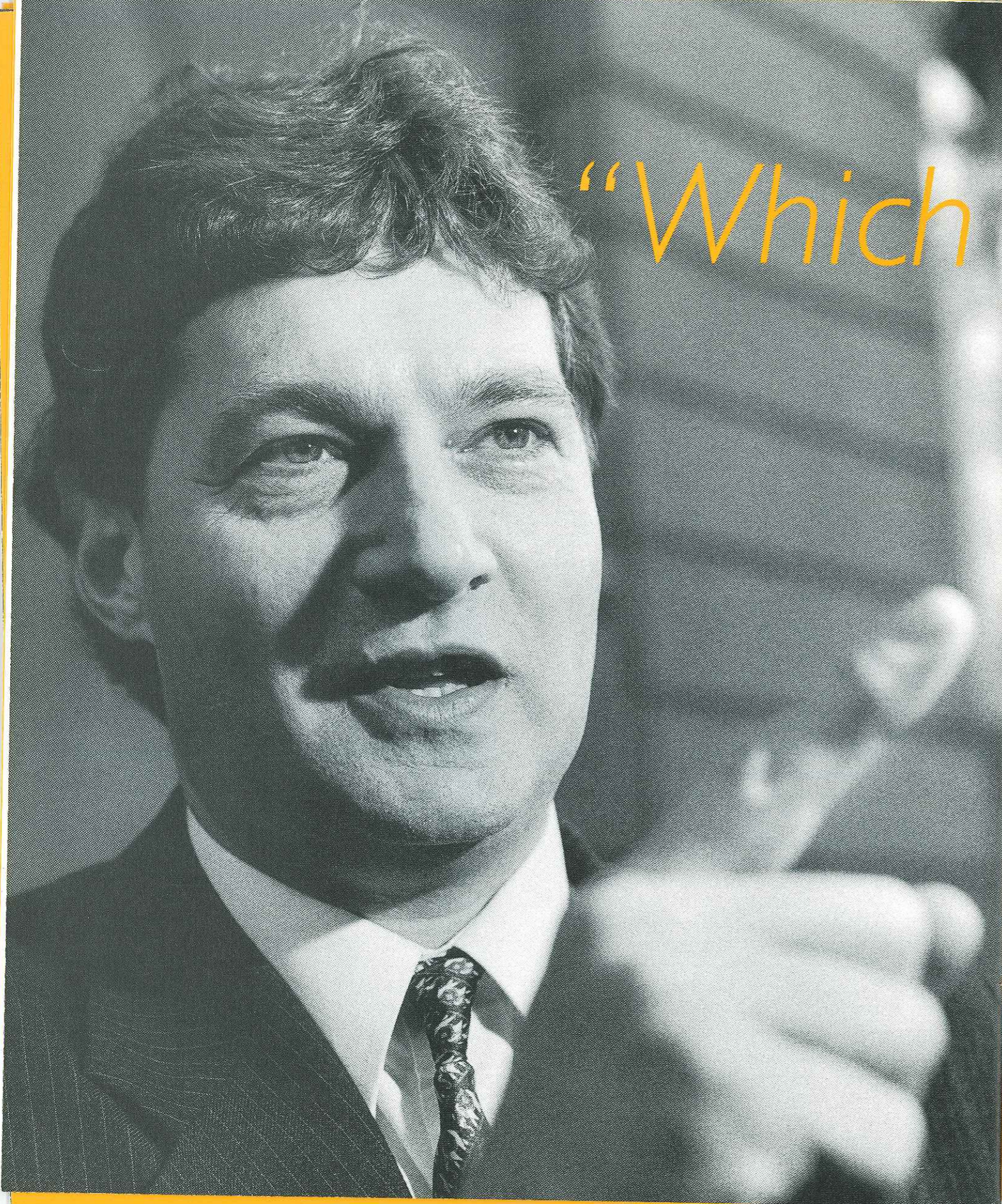
- **Enhance the rights of patients.** We will strengthen the Patients' Charter and include rights to treatment within a specified time, a choice of GP, information about the options for treatment, guaranteed access to health records and better redress.
- **Ensure that action is taken to improve poor quality services.** We will enable patients and staff to apply directly to our new National Inspectorate of Health and Social Care to carry out inspections and take action where deficiencies come to light.

**Community care**

Our aim is to create a society in which people, whatever their needs, can live their lives with dignity.

**We will:**

- **Give people choice** in the services they use and the way they are provided. We will require Councils to extend to those over 65 the right to arrange their own care privately, if they wish. This will promote independence and enable them to find better value for money.
- **Care for carers.** We will introduce a new Carer's Benefit, in place of the Independent Living Allowance, in order to meet more of the financial cost of caring. We will extend the Carer's Benefit, as resources allow, to those over retirement age and work to improve advice, information, training and counselling for carers. We will seek to increase access to respite care and ensure that carers and users are involved in decisions about care. We will draw up a Charter that sets out carers' rights and responsibilities.
- **Establish high national standards for all community care services.** Our new independent Inspectorate of Health and Social Care will publish codes of practice for residential and nursing homes, and have the power to close any home that consistently falls short of national standards. We will introduce national charging and eligibility guidelines to ensure a 'level playing field' of provision and charges.
- **Protect people from the excessive cost of care.** We will, as resources allow, raise the threshold at which older people are required to make a contribution to their long-term care. We are committed to working on a cross-party basis, to establish a national agreement on a system for funding care services that does not penalise thrift.



*“Which*

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# Which party will clean up the mess in our politics?

**Our aim:** To restore trust in British politics.

**The problem:** People know that British politics isn't working. Their politicians have lied to them, their Parliament has become tainted by sleaze and their government is out of touch and doesn't listen.

**Our commitment:** Liberal Democrats will modernise Britain's outdated institutions, rebuild trust, renew democracy and give Britain's nations, regions and local communities a greater say over their own affairs.

## Our priorities are to:

- **Restore trust between people and government**, by ending secrecy and guaranteeing peoples' rights and freedoms.
- **Renew Britain's democracy**, by creating a fair voting system, reforming Parliament and setting higher standards for politicians' conduct.
- **Give government back to the people**, by decentralising power to the nations, regions and communities of the United Kingdom.

## Restoring trust in politics

British politics remains far too secretive. We cannot rebuild trust in politics without making government more open and accountable.

### We will:

- **Safeguard individual liberties**, by establishing a Bill of Rights. As a first step, we will incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law so that it is enforceable by the courts in the UK. We will set up a Human Rights Commission to strengthen the protection of individual rights. We will create a Ministry for Justice responsible for protecting human rights and overseeing the administration of the legal system, the courts and legal aid. We oppose the introduction of Identity Cards.
- **Break open the excessive secrecy of government**, by passing a Freedom of Information Act establishing a citizens right to know.
- **Cut back the quango state** We will scrap unnecessary quangos, handing their functions over to elected bodies. We will require those that remain to meet in public and to list their members' interests. We will establish a fair, open and more representative appointment process for all quangos.
- **Give people more say in decision-making.** We will make greater use of national referendums for constitutional issues, for

example, changing the voting system or any further transfer of power to European institutions. We will enable referendums to be held on specific local issues where there is public demand.

## Renewing democracy

Britain's political institutions are outdated and unrepresentative.

### We will:

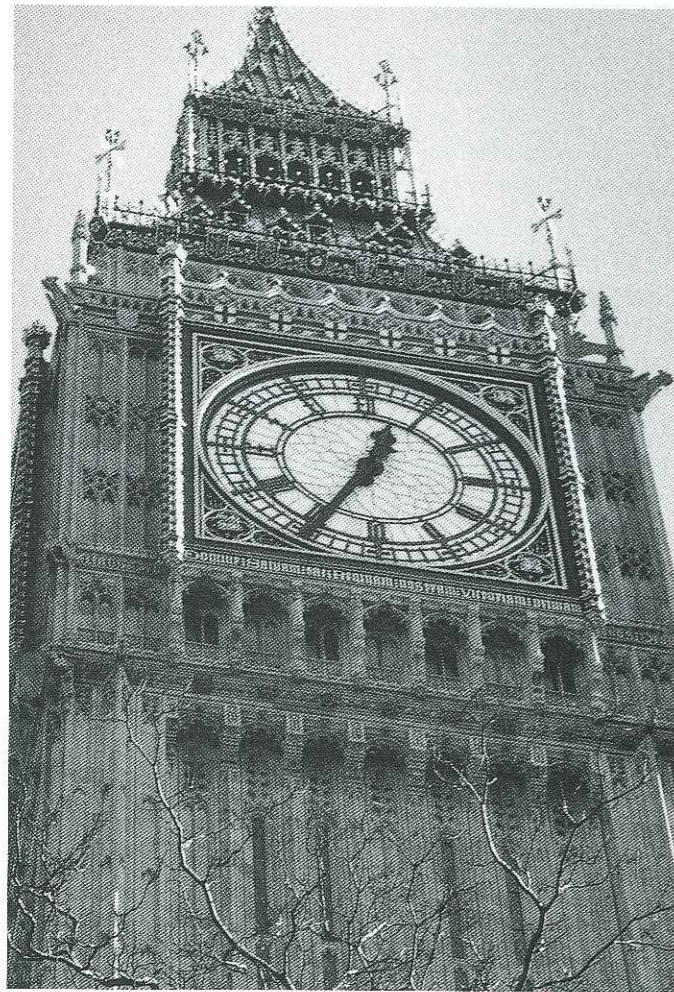
- **Modernise the House of Commons.** We will reduce the number of MPs by 200 (one third) and introduce tougher rules for their conduct, behaviour and outside sources of income. We will improve drafting and consultation on legislation, and strengthen MPs' ability to hold the government to account.
- **Create an effective and democratic upper house.** We will, over two Parliaments, transform the House of Lords into a predominantly elected second chamber capable of representing the nations and regions of the UK and of playing a key role in scrutinising European legislation.
- **Introduce a fair system of voting.** We will introduce proportional representation for all elections, to put more power in the hands of voters and make government more representative.
- **Make politics more stable.** We will establish a fixed Parliamentary term of four years.
- **Clean up party funding.** We will reform the way political parties are funded and limit the amount they can spend on national election campaigns. We will make each party publish its accounts and list all large donors.

**Giving government back to the people**

Far too much power has been concentrated in Westminster and Whitehall. Democratic government should be as close to ordinary people as possible.

**We will:**

- **Introduce Home Rule for Scotland**, with the creation of a Scottish Parliament, elected by proportional representation, and able to raise and reduce income tax.
- **Introduce Home Rule for Wales**, with the creation of a Welsh Senedd, elected by proportional representation, and able to raise and reduce income tax.



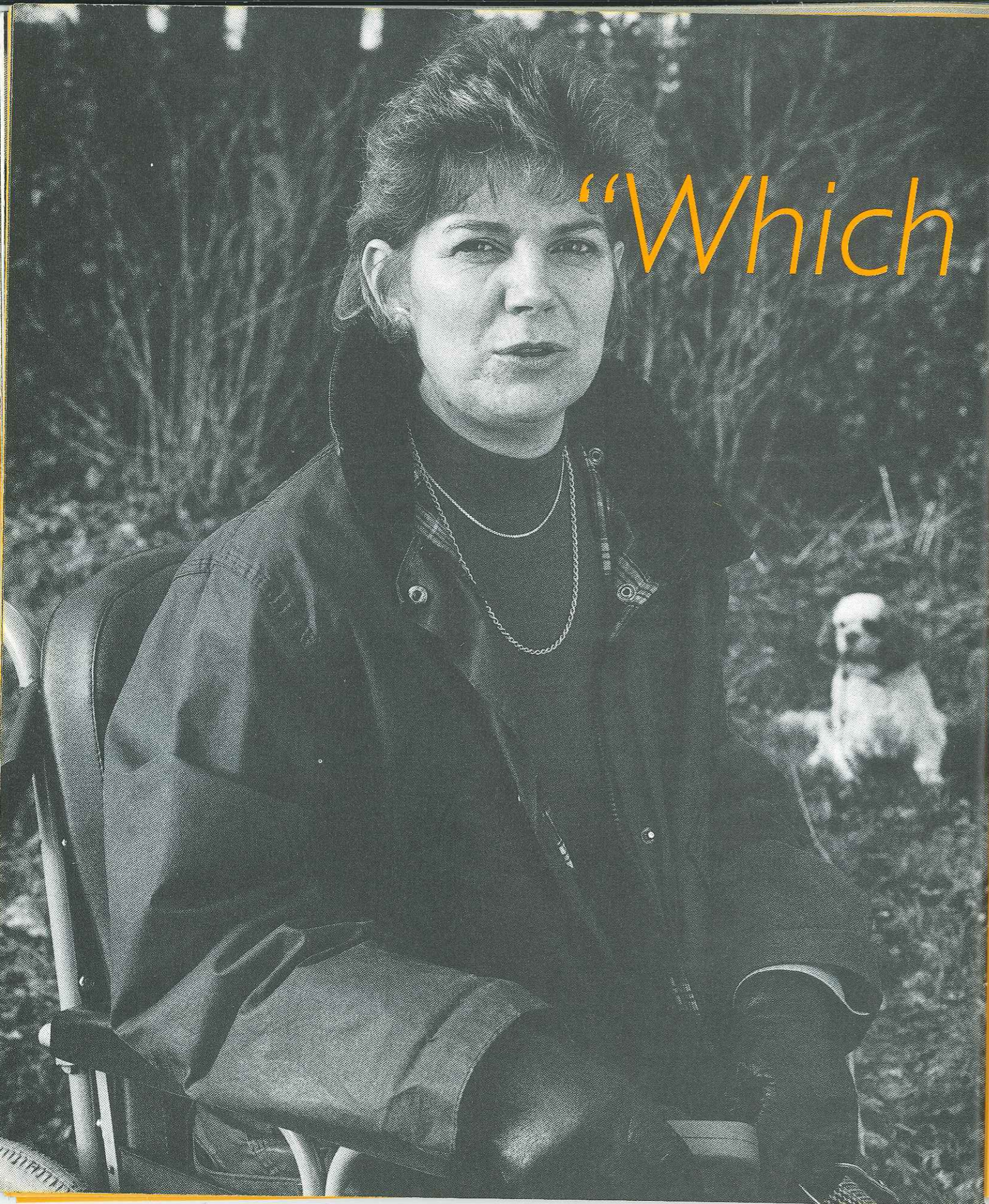
- **Create the framework to make existing regional decision-making in England democratically accountable**, and enable the establishment of elected regional assemblies, where there is demonstrated public demand. We will create a strategic authority for London.
- **Strengthen local government**. We will establish a 'power of general competence', giving Councils wider scope for action. We will allow local authorities to raise more of their funds locally, give them greater discretion over spending and allow them, within strict limits, to go directly to the markets to raise finance for capital projects. We will, in the long-term replace Council Tax with a Local Income Tax, and replace the Uniform Business Rate with a fairer system of business rates, raised through local Councils and set in accordance with local priorities.

**Northern Ireland**

Peace in Northern Ireland depends on containing and ultimately removing the entrenched hostility between the two main communities in Northern Ireland.

**We will:**

- **Establish a power-sharing executive for Northern Ireland**, elected under a fair and proportional system of voting. We will press for a new constitutional settlement based on the protection of individual rights through a Bill of Rights, incorporating the European Convention.
- **Give individuals more power and political responsibility**. We will introduce a fair and proportional voting system for all elections, and reform and strengthen local government in the province.
- **Ensure respect for civil liberties**. We will introduce an independent procedure for investigating complaints against the security forces, and reform the Diplock system so that three judges instead of one preside over non-jury trials. We will urgently implement the North Report's recommendations for an independent commission to supervise parades and marches.
- **Promote economic growth**. We will strengthen the all-Ireland economy through the creation of effective cross-border agencies. We will invest in education and promote inward investment.
- **Build on the Joint Declaration and the Framework Document**, by working with the Irish Government to create agreement between as many of the constitutional parties as possible. Sinn Fein can only be admitted to this process if, in accordance with the Mitchell principles, they and the IRA turn their backs on terrorism. Meanwhile, we must remain vigilant and keep in place the present means for countering terrorism.



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# Which party will give me the opportunity to make the most of my life?

**Our aim:** To widen opportunities for everyone in Britain to make the most of their lives.

**The problem:** Poverty, lack of training, low pay and discrimination deny too many people the opportunity to make the most of their lives. Meanwhile, the welfare system no longer meets the needs of a modern society. It locks too many into dependency and, too often, penalises those who wish to work and save.

**Our commitment:** Liberal Democrats will promote individual self-reliance, strengthen equality for all before the law and in employment, and work for a society that cherishes diversity.

## Our priorities are to:

- Ensure that, by the millennium, every young person has had the opportunity to work, learn, train and make a positive contribution to society.
- Give women greater opportunities to play a full role in work and in society.
- Ensure dignity in retirement.
- Break open the poverty trap that makes people better off on the dole than in work.
- Modernise Britain's welfare state for the twenty-first century, building a new cross-party partnership for reform.

## Breaking the poverty trap

Unemployment wastes the talents and denies people the opportunity to contribute to the well-being of their families and increase Britain's wealth.

### We will:

- **Help long-term unemployed people back to work.** We will establish a self-financing Benefit Transfer Programme allowing those who have been unemployed for a year or more to turn their unemployment benefits into an incentive for employers to recruit and train them. The value of the benefit to employers will gradually be reduced.
- **Break open the poverty trap.** We will take nearly 500,000 low earners out of income tax altogether by raising tax thresholds. This will provide lower taxes and new incentives to work, while cutting the benefits bill and reducing tax for 99.5 per cent of all income taxpayers. This will be paid for by introducing a new top tax rate of 50p on taxable income of over £100,000 per year. We will replace Income Support and Family Credit with a simpler, more efficient Low Income Benefit that increases financial incentives for people going back to work.
- **Modernise Britain's welfare system.** We will initiate a comprehensive review of the

welfare system to build a new framework for welfare and opportunity, on a cross-party basis. Our aim is to provide a more effective safety net for the disadvantaged, to encourage work, without compulsion, and to widen opportunities.

- **Help parents to return to work.** We will develop a national childcare strategy, drawing on public and private provision. We will, over time, extend tax relief on workplace nurseries to other forms of day nursery care.
- **Establish a voluntary Citizens Service** to give people, especially young people, up to 2 years' work on such projects as environmental conservation, crime prevention, housing renovation, social services and the armed services.
- **Encourage a flexible labour market,** while protecting the low paid with a regionally variable, minimum hourly rate.
- **Crack down on social security fraud and tax evasion** and shift the money saved into new policies to enhance opportunities. We will tackle the high levels of fraud and overpayment in the social security budget. We will stop tax evasion and close off tax avoidance loopholes.

## Older people

Everyone in Britain should be able to look forward to a retirement of security, opportunity and dignity. Old people feel that they are fast becoming Britain's forgotten generation.

### We will:

- **Guarantee everyone an acceptable minimum standard of living in retirement.** We will create an additional top-up pension for pensioners with incomes below the Income Support level. This will be indexed to earnings and tapered as outside income increases. The basic state pension will remain indexed to prices. We will start to phase out the expensive, unfair

contributory system and base the right to a state pension on citizenship and residence.

- **Enable people to choose when to start drawing a pension.** We will bring in a flexible 'decade of retirement', between the ages of 60 and 70.

- **Protect the rights of older people.** We will legislate against discrimination on the grounds of age.



- **Expand private pensions and give people more control over their pensions.** We wish to see more people making provision for their old age. We will replace the State Earnings Related Scheme (SERPS) with a scheme under which all employees have personal or occupational pensions. Existing accrued SERPS will, however, be preserved. We will expand occupational and personal pension schemes by giving all employees an entitlement to participate in a pension scheme of their

choice, funded by contributions from employers and employees. Pension rights will be fully secured if people change jobs. We will treat pensions as deferred income over which pension-holders have full rights of security, control and portability.

- **Abolish standing charges for water** and create a fairer system of charging.

### Young people

We propose a new deal for young people, in which new rights and new responsibilities go hand in hand.

**We will:**

- **Expand opportunities.** Our aim is that every young person between the ages of 16 and 19 will have the opportunity to either work, learn, train or take a place on our new Citizens Service.

- **Restore security to excluded young people.** The withdrawal of benefit rights has condemned thousands of young people to life out of work and on the streets, at great long-term public cost. We will restore access to benefits for 16 and 17 year-olds. In the longer term, we aim to scrap the lower rate of income support for those under 25.

- **Ensure that young people can learn their rights and responsibilities,** with citizenship classes in every school and parenting classes for young adults. We will give children and young people access to information about their legal rights and obligations, review the age of majority and ensure that young people are represented on bodies that especially concern them.

- **Expand local youth services.** We will require local Councils to provide a statutory youth service in partnership with the voluntary sector.

### Families

Families, in all their forms, are a basic building block of society. But the nature of families is changing. This has brought new stresses which must be addressed. But it has also brought new attitudes, such as the sharing of family responsibilities, which should be encouraged.

**We will:**

- **Give families more security.** We will take nearly 500,000 low earners out of tax altogether, by raising tax thresholds. We will replace Income Support and Family Credit with a simpler, more efficient Low Income Benefit that helps people back to work. We aim to improve the support for those caring for older people and people with disabilities.

- **Introduce fair and workable child support legislation.** We will repeal the Child Support Act and abolish the Child Support Agency. We believe that parents should financially support their children at an appropriate level. Where there are disputes between the parents, these should be decided by the courts, not by an inflexible formula. We will create a new system of unified family courts to decide these questions, after they have heard all the evidence.

- **Promote good parenting.** We will encourage the provision of parenting classes for young adults. We will increase the role of parents in education by extending home/school/pupil links, and develop home-school partnership arrangements, to assist in addressing the needs of the child.

- **Expand parental rights.** We will introduce a statutory right to parental leave and develop Maternity Benefit into a new, flexible parental benefit to be shared between partners. We will ensure that fostering and adoption law is based on the suitability of prospective fosterers and the needs of the child.

- **Help parents to return to work.** We will, over time, extend tax relief on workplace

nurseries to other forms of day nursery care. We will develop a national childcare strategy, drawing on public and private provision.

- **Encourage flexible working patterns.** We will encourage job sharing and family-friendly employment practices, especially in the public sector. We will give private sector employees approaching retirement age, or with responsibilities for young children, the right to negotiate reduced hours or a career break.

### Women

There is still a long way to go before women in Britain have equal opportunities.

**We will:**

- **Promote equality in the workplace.** We will, over time, extend employment and pensions rights to part-time employees, on a pro-rata basis. We will bring in tougher obligations on employers to establish equal opportunities procedures and pursue the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.

- **Make pensions fairer to women,** by working to replace the contributory system with pension rights based on citizenship and residence in the UK. We will bring forward the introduction of pension splitting on divorce.

- **Improve the services that women receive from the NHS.** We will promote equal treatment of the sexes within the Health Service. We will set targets for the expansion of facilities which enable women to consult female health professionals.

- **Make the legal system fairer to women.** We will strengthen the civil law remedies for domestic violence and improve the treatment of rape victims by the court system. We will seek to improve the provision of refuge places for victims of domestic violence.

- **Enhance the role of women in public life.** We will tackle the under-representation of women on public bodies by setting a target



that within a decade at least one-third of all those on all public bodies should be women. We will reform the procedures and facilities of the House of Commons to make them more accommodating to women and families.

### Disabled people

Progress in equal opportunities for disabled people remains patchy and unacceptably slow.

#### We will:

- **Guarantee the rights of disabled people.** We will ban discrimination on the grounds of disability and pass comprehensive legislation securing the civil rights of disabled people. We will draw up a Charter of Rights setting out what our new Bill of Rights means for disabled people.
- **Give disabled people more independence.** We will introduce a Partial Capacity Benefit, building on the Disability Working Allowance, to assist those in work who cannot fully support themselves financially. We aim to increase financial support for disabled people who cannot find work and to make provision for the real costs of disability.
- **Improve access.** We will publish a code of practice to improve access to buildings and transport. We will require government departments, local Councils and public organisations to make their key public literature available in Braille or where appropriate tape.
- **Make education inclusive.** As part of our £2 billion investment in education, we will increase funding for, and enforce implementation of, the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs.

### Ethnic minorities

Despite progress over recent years, members of ethnic minorities are too often denied equal opportunities and have to face racism

and discrimination on a daily basis. Diversity, pluralism and a multicultural society are sources of strength for Britain.

#### We will:

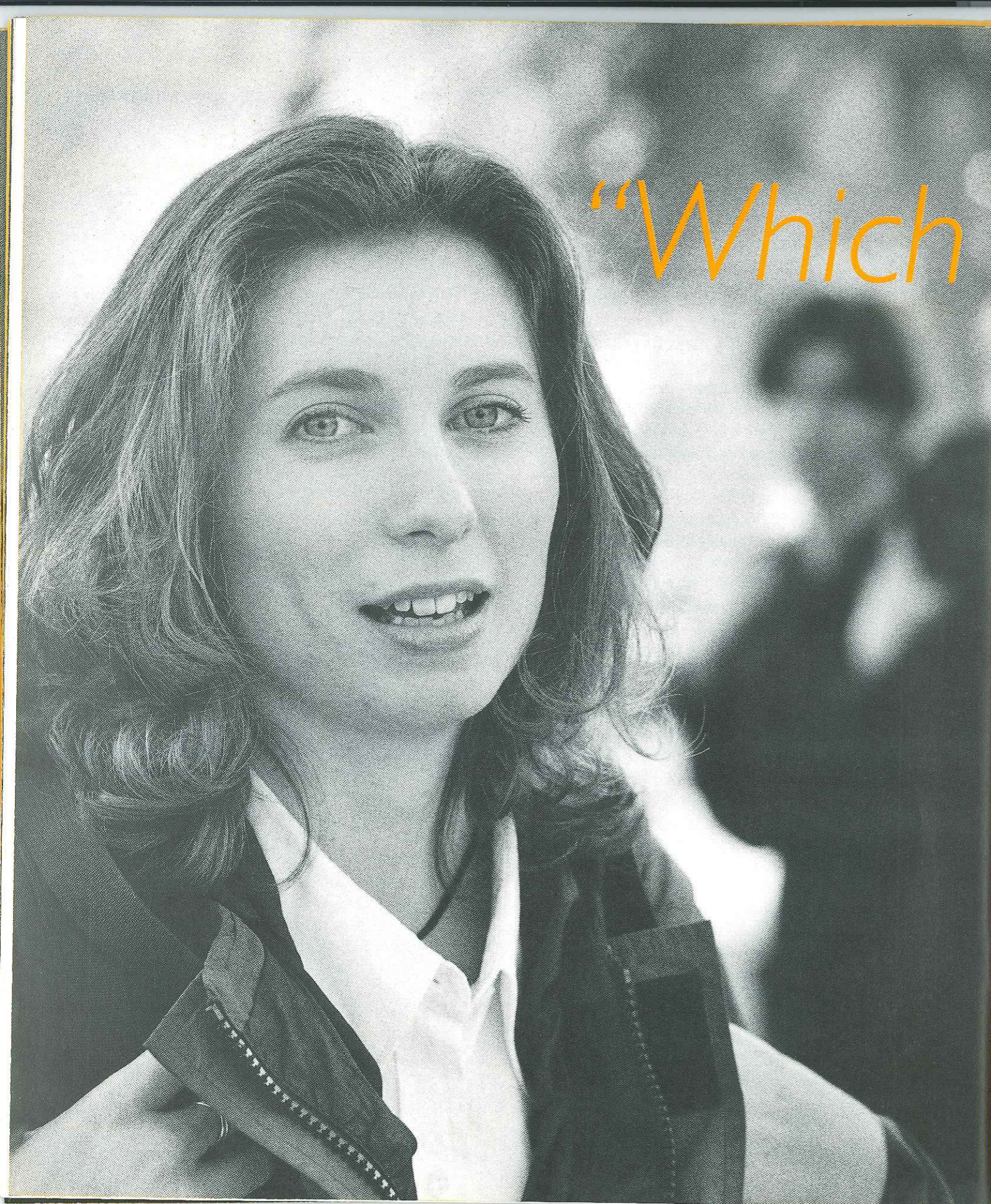
- **Strengthen action against discrimination.** We will create a new Human Rights Commission, combining the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission. We will give statutory force to the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice in employment, and ensure that Britain plays a leading role in strengthening anti-discrimination legislation throughout the European Union.
- **Ensure equal opportunities for all.** We will require local authorities and housing associations to ensure equal opportunities in housing allocation. We will expand access to mother-tongue teaching, for both adults and children, where this takes place through self-help and community groups.
- **Free immigration laws from racial discrimination.** We will ensure that immigration policy is non-discriminatory in its application. We will reform current immigration laws so as to enable genuine family reunions. We will restore benefit rights to asylum seekers and ensure that asylum claims are dealt with swiftly.
- **Increase ethnic minorities' confidence in the police.** We will encourage the recruitment of ethnic minorities into the police force and require action to be taken against discrimination within the force. We will tackle any discriminatory use of police powers, such as stop and search, and enhance police action to deal with racial attacks. We will encourage the use of aggravated sentencing for racially motivated crimes.

### Lesbians and gay men

In a free and tolerant society, discrimination on any grounds is unacceptable. Diversity is a source of strength.

#### We will:

- **Ensure equality before the law for lesbians and gay men** through our new Human Rights Commission and the Bill of Rights. We will create a common age of consent regardless of gender or sexual orientation.
- **Stop discrimination.** We will outlaw incitement to hatred and discrimination in housing and employment, including the armed forces, on grounds of sexual orientation. We will repeal 'section 28' of the 1988 Local Government Act. We will reform the law, ensure that the police and local authorities deal more effectively with homophobic attacks, and encourage police forces to be more representative of the communities they serve.



*Which*

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# Which party has the vision to build the kind of world I want to live in?

**Our aim:** To recast Britain's foreign policy and enable this country to play a leading role in shaping Europe and strengthening international institutions.

**The problem:** For too long British foreign policy has looked backwards to its imperial past. Britain's interests have been damaged by an attitude to Europe that has been, at best, ambivalent and, at worst, hostile. This attitude has also cost Britain opportunities for influence and advantage.

**Our commitment:** Liberal Democrats will ensure that Britain plays a leading role in shaping Europe, democratising its institutions and strengthening its role as a framework for prosperity, peace and security. Britain, with its world experience, expert armed forces and permanent membership of the UN Security Council, has a unique role to play in reforming international institutions for the next century.

## Our priorities are to:

- Make the European Union (EU) work more effectively and democratise its institutions.
- Widen Europe to include the new democracies of central and eastern Europe.
- Create a strong framework for Britain's defence and security through NATO and European co-operation.
- Give Britain a leading role in reforming and strengthening the UN and other international institutions.
- Promote an enforceable framework for international law, human rights and the protection of the environment.

## Positive leadership in Europe

Britain's interests can only best be pursued through constructive participation in an enlarged European Union. Our vision is of a European Union that is decentralised, democratic and diverse. A strong and united Europe, but one that respects cultural traditions and national and regional identities.

## In seeking to reform the EU, our priorities are to:

- **Give the British people a say.** Reform that fundamentally changes Britain's place in Europe should only proceed if it has the explicit support of Britain's people. If there is any substantial change in Britain's relationship with the EU, the British people must give their consent through a referendum.
- **Make EU institutions more democratic and accountable.** We will give the House of Commons a more effective role in scrutinising European policy. We also want the Council of Ministers and the EC Commission to be more accountable to the elected European Parliament. We will introduce a fair and proportional voting system for British MEPs in time for the 1999 European Parliament elections.

- **Make EU decision-making more efficient and effective.** Europe cannot effectively enlarge without improving its decision-making. We therefore favour the wider application of majority voting. But we will keep the veto on all issues relating to the constitution, budgetary matters and regulations on pay and social security. We support the use of the 'double majority', especially on matters such as foreign and security policy. Each member state must retain the unfettered right to make its own decisions on the commitment of its national troops.

## Pursuing Britain's interests in Europe

Britain has much to gain from EU membership. This will take new leadership, a new approach and a renewed sense of national confidence.

## Our aims in Europe are to:

- **Enhance economic prosperity,** by promoting the freedom of movement of people, goods, services and money throughout the EU and by completing the European Single Market, particularly in areas of financial services, pensions and air travel.
- **Participate in a successful single currency.** Being part of a successful single currency will bring low inflation and low interest rates. Staying out will result in less investment and a loss of influence. However, three conditions must be met before Britain can join. First, the single currency must be firmly founded on the Maastricht criteria. Second, Britain must meet those criteria. Third, the British people must have agreed to it in a referendum.
- **Strengthen the European framework for peace and security.** Britain's security and national interests are best pursued in partnership with its European neighbours. We will work to strengthen European Common Foreign and Security policy to enable greater scope for united European action. Individual member states must be free to decide

whether or not their national forces will take part in any particular action.

- **Fight crime and protect citizens' rights** through more effective co-operation between EU states' police and customs forces with greater democratic accountability. We will work to improve European co-operation against cross-border criminal activity and allow free movement for Britain's people throughout Europe. The administration of border controls should remain with individual member nations until they can be confident that the EU's external borders are secure.



- **Reform the Common Agricultural Policy**, converting it into a system of direct payments to support economic, social and environmental goals in rural communities.

- **Reform fisheries policies**, scrapping the Common Fisheries Policy and replacing it with a new Europe-wide fisheries policy based on the regional management of fish stocks. We will take urgent action to end quota-hopping and begin the phased abolition of industrial fishing.

### **Strong defence in an uncertain world**

The first decades of the next century are likely to be turbulent and unstable everywhere, including within and around Europe. Britain must maintain an effective security capability. This will best be achieved through NATO and European co-operation, and this country must continue to play a full part in both.

**We will:**

- **Maintain a strong defence at home and enable the UK to play a leading role in keeping international peace.** We will maintain Britain's overall defence capability at its current level, whilst ensuring UK forces meet current needs and are appropriate to potential threats.
- **Retain Britain's basic nuclear capability** through the Trident submarine force until such time as international multilateral nuclear disarmament can be achieved. We will restrict the number of nuclear warheads on Trident to the same number as previously deployed on Polaris.
- **Resist the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.** We will press for the conclusion of a verifiable Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. We will ensure that Britain plays an active part in talks to reduce the holdings of strategic nuclear weapons.
- **Support the principle of common security.** We support the extension of the security guarantees, from which western Europe has benefited, to the new democracies of central and eastern Europe. We support NATO and its enlargement.

### **Working for peace, security and sustainability**

In an increasingly inter-dependent world, the security of a medium sized nation like Britain is best preserved within a framework of international law that is effective and enforceable.

#### **Reforming the United Nations**

Playing a leading role in strengthening and reforming the United Nations should be a central aspect of Britain's foreign policy over the next decade.

**We will work to:**

- **Strengthen the UN's peacekeeping capability** so that it can take earlier and more effective action to prevent or suppress conflict. This should include establishing fast track machinery for negotiations; permanent, on-call, peacekeeping forces made up from high-calibre troops provided by member states; the reinstatement of a Military Staff Committee; the establishment of a UN Staff College to train officers; and improvements to the UN's command control, communication and intelligence capabilities.
- **Support the establishment of an International Criminal Court** to deal with genocide and war crimes.

#### **Protecting the global environment**

Pollution and environmental degradation do not respect national borders. Countries must work together if the world's environment is to be protected.

**We will:**

- **Take a lead in international environmental negotiations.** We will press for tough and legally binding international targets for greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants.
- **Develop a global system of environmental**

**protection.** We will work for the creation of a global environmental organisation. We will promote an environmental equivalent of the Geneva Convention, to outlaw gross acts of environmental destruction in times of war.

#### **Tackling world poverty**

The elimination of global famine, pestilence and poverty is not only a moral challenge, it is also essential for the world's long-term stability and peace.

**We will:**

- **Increase Britain's contribution to overseas aid.** We will set out a timetable for sustained progress towards achieving the UN target for overseas development aid of 0.7 per cent of GNP within the next 10 years.
- **Promote a timetable for debt relief to the poorest states** including a programme for cancelling debt and the creation of new and additional resources for debt relief.
- **Target Britain's bilateral aid where it is most needed.** We will focus Britain's bilateral aid on the least developed countries and end the practice of tying aid.
- **Require states that receive UK development assistance to respect the fundamental human rights of their people** and suspend UK programmes where these standards are breached.

#### **Controlling arms sales**

The global arms trade fuels conflicts, hinders prosperity and robs the world's poor of resources. Its growth must be diminished.

**We will:**

- **End the sale of British arms, war material, and 'dual use' technologies** to regimes which abuse human rights, and strictly control arms sales to regions of tension or potential conflict.
- **Seek a new international regime to control**

**the arms trade.** We will support tighter EU-wide restrictions on transfers of military technology to non-democratic regimes and press for the establishment of a mandatory UN register, in which all arms sales and transfers must be listed.

● **Ban landmines.** We will place an immediate and total ban on the production, stockpiling and export of anti-personnel landmines and work towards a global ban on landmine production.

#### **Free and fair trade**

Free and fair trade benefits all. The GATT Uruguay Round has successfully lowered barriers to international trade, but further reforms are needed.

#### **We will seek action to:**

● **Enhance free trade by further reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers,** especially against the poorest countries.

● **Improve global labour standards** by permitting countries to discriminate against goods produced by nations that maintain practices such as child, slave and forced labour. We will support the work of the International Labour Organisation in raising labour standards throughout the world.

● **Advance environmental objectives.** We support the addition of an environmental sustainability clause to the GATT, setting out agreed principles of environmental policy against which trade measures can be judged.

● **Reduce trans-national corporations' ability to abuse market power,** through the development of a framework for global competition policy.

## The Liberal Democrats and your tax

A copy of our Annual Tax Contract will be delivered to each UK household following the Budget each year. Some of the information which would be included is provided on the next page.

This Annual Tax Contract will be in keeping with our four Tax Pledges:

**1.) No taxation without explanation**  
Central Government should inform taxpayers of the ways in which their money is raised and spent, just as local councils now do.

**2.) No promises unless the bill is attached**  
People have the right to know the Government's priorities and how much they will cost. When we make significant changes in our tax and spending priorities we will tell people where the money has come from. We will ask the National Audit Office to make sure that additional expenditure earmarked for specific projects is spent accordingly.

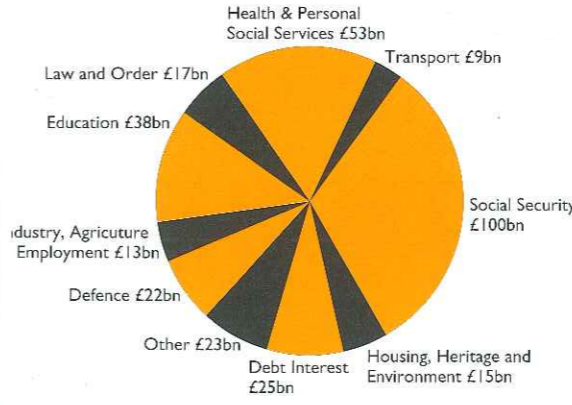
**3.) No more tax without tackling waste**  
Each year we will set out the measures which we plan to implement in order to reduce wasteful expenditure and deliver best value for money to taxpayers. We will never raise taxes without first scrutinising Government expenditure for waste.

**4.) Fair tax for all**  
Tax bands, rates and reliefs should ensure that everyone contributes according to their ability to pay and that the tax burden is fairly shared. We will aim to take more of those on low incomes out of tax completely. We will clamp down on tax avoidance and evasion. We will provide a mechanism for people to give their views on tax and spending priorities.

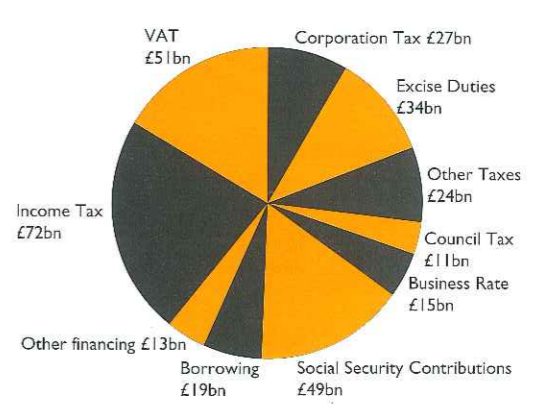
- Costing our commitment**
- We have issued alongside this manifesto a Costings Supplement to show in detail how our proposals will be financed.
  - We will raise the basic rate of income tax by one penny in the pound – from 23p to 24p – to help finance our £2bn per year programme of Education investment.
  - We will increase the amount of income which people can receive before they start to pay income tax by £200 per year to £4,245. This tax cut will be paid for by introducing a new rate of income tax of 50%, payable on taxable income of over £100,000 per year. Half a million people will be freed from income tax altogether.
  - We will put 5p on a packet of cigarettes and use the money to restore free eye and dental checks for all and freeze prescription charges.

## How the proposals in this manifesto would alter your tax and the Government's spending

**Current spending**  
**How this Government is spending your money**  
(Current Government Spending Plans 1997-98)  
Total=£315bn per year



**Current taxation**  
**Where this Government's money comes from**  
(Current Government Revenue Plans 1997-98)  
Total=£315bn per year



### How these proposals would change Government spending over a full year.

Liberal Democrats would <u>increase</u> Government spending on:	
Education	+£2,050m
Health	+£565m
Pensions	+£265m

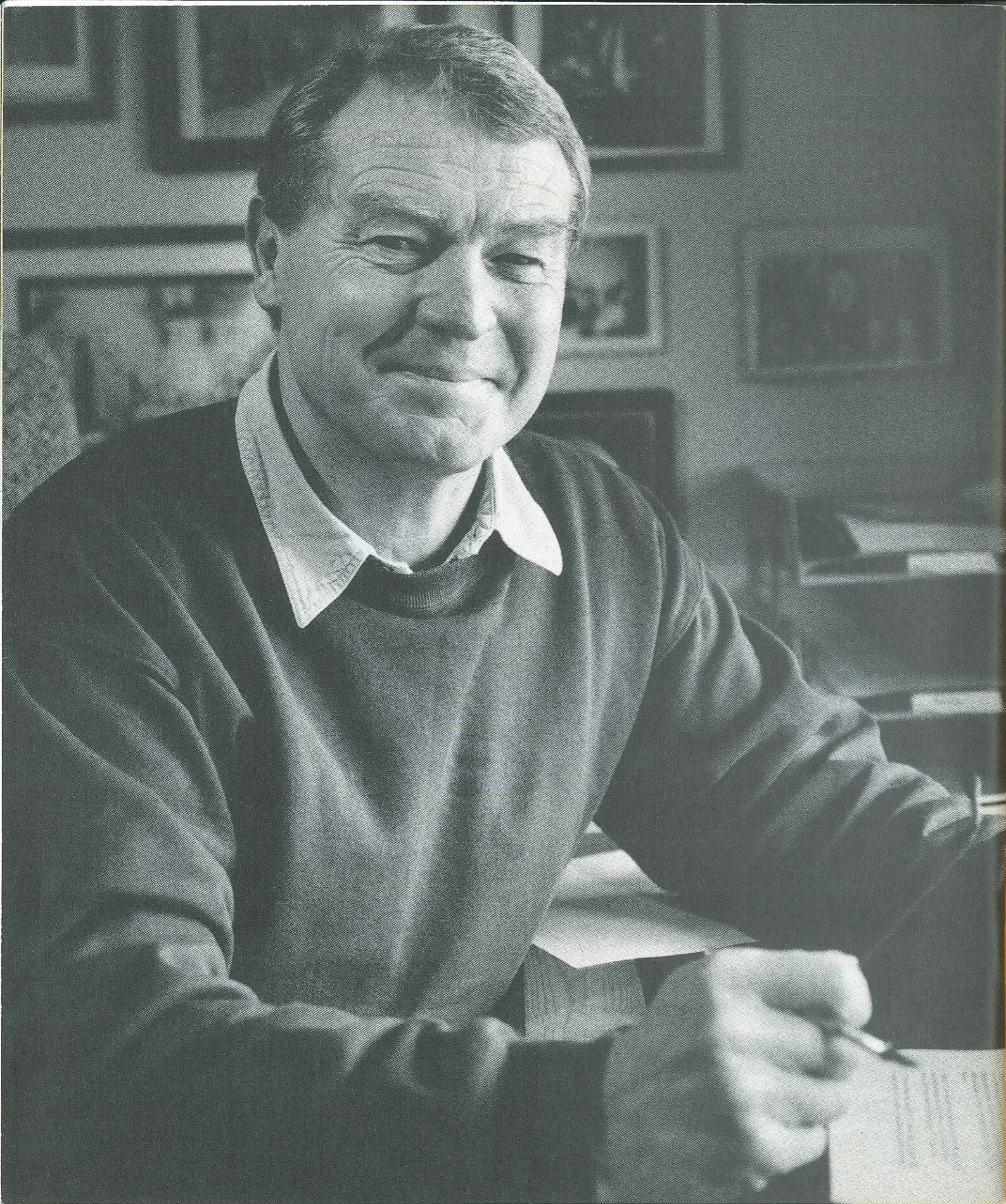
Liberal Democrats would <u>decrease</u> Government spending on:	
Private consultants	-£120m
Publicity	-£50m
Empty properties	-£25m

### How these proposals would change your income tax

Income Tax Changes for 1997/98	
New Personal Tax Allowance	£4,245
New Basic Rate	24p
New rate for Income over £100,000	50%

- Main income tax changes**
- Around 70% of Adults will pay lower or unchanged income tax under our proposals.
  - Around half of all income taxpayers would be better off or no worse off under our income tax proposals.
  - Excluding those earning over £100,000 per year, the average income taxpayer will pay only around 45p extra per week in income tax under our plans.

FOR FULL DETAILS OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS' 1997 MANIFESTO COSTINGS, PLEASE SEE OUR COSTINGS SUPPLEMENT



In this manifesto, we have set out a practical, forward-looking programme to modernise Britain. Its central theme is the widening of opportunities. And its aim is to make Britain a nation of self-reliant individuals, living in strong communities, backed by an enabling government.

We do not duck the choices that have to be faced in this election.

And we do not pretend that they are easy – or free. High-quality education has to be paid for. As do decent public services and a more secure society.

You cannot, in the present climate, have these and tax cuts as well.

You have to choose.

We ask you to do so.

Your vote can make a real difference in turning our country away from short-term politics towards a more constructive long-term approach.

And with your support we believe we can make a difference too. Every vote we receive is a vote for better education, the modernisation of our politics, a cleaner environment, a better health service and more crime free communities.

Every vote we get and every seat we win will ensure that in the next Parliament, Britain, can at last face, up to the challenge, as we enter the next millennium.

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