



Ethnic Minorities Liberal Democrats

Liberal Democrats HQ, 4 Cowley Street, London, SW1P 3NB
Website: <http://www.ethnic-minority.libdems.org> Email

Dear Sir / Madam

I am writing to introduce the Ethnic Minority Liberal Democrats. For your information, please find attached our Ethnic Minority Mini-Manifesto. It lays out our philosophy as a party and our approach as Liberal Democrats. We believe we are the only inclusive party that is working to provide equality of opportunity to all members of society regardless of colour, creed, race or gender.

Our manifesto summarises many aspects of our policies that are particularly relevant to ethnic minorities in addition to our main policies on Education, Health, the Economy and Law and Order. Our 1p tax policy to ring-fence £3billion a year on Education is a real alternative to the empty promises of the last 22 years.

The Conservatives left Health, Education and Public Transport seriously under funded and they ignored pensioners. Labour maintained Tory spending policies and they have failed to make any improvement while in office.

Our influence in running the country has increased over the last 12 years and the Liberal Democrats now share power in the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly and London Assembly. At the same time, Liberal Democrats are running councils across the length and breadth of the country to serve their communities. Where the Liberal Democrats hold power, we have delivered on our promises. In Scotland the Liberal Democrats have abolish tuition fees, and in Wales dental and eye tests are now free the pensioners and the young.

The Liberal Democrats provide a positive alternative for the British ethnic minority community – we are a credible option. The ethnic minorities should not feel the political parties do not represent them. We are fielding 28 ethnic candidates at this General Election, more than the Conservatives and Labour parties put together.

The Liberal Democrats have set-up an information office specifically to deal with ethnic issues. The office is open seven days a week during the election campaign. We also have a highly informative website that has translated Liberal Democrat policies in several languages. Please contact us or your local candidate with any inquiries.

I hope that this information is of interest to you and your community and that together we can succeed in giving Britain "*A Real Chance for Real Change*".

Yours Sincerely

Nasser Butt
Chairman - EMLD

INFORMATION LINES FOR ALL YOUR QUESTIONS
Website: <http://www.ethnic-minority.libdems.org>
Email: help@ethnic-minority.libdems.org
Help lines: 020 8741 9986
Fax Help Line: 020 8741 7562

Freedom, Justice, Honesty

Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Ethnic Minorities

Liberal Democrats will:

- Strengthen the fight against discrimination with an Equality Act.
- Tackle hate crimes.
- Free immigration laws from discrimination.
- Protect people fleeing from persecution.



**LIBERAL
DEMOCRATS**

www.libdems.org.uk

Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Ethnic Minorities



A Message from Charles Kennedy

The Liberal Democrats are the only political party whose primary mission is to protect, promote and proclaim freedom. The freedom we cherish does not, however, mean the freedom of the strong to oppress the weak, or the freedom of majorities to ignore the needs of minorities. The great Liberal philosopher L.T. Hobhouse wrote that 'the struggle for liberty ... is the struggle for equality'. So justice in the struggle to secure liberty and equality is at the heart of our philosophy. Liberal Democrats recognise that minority ethnic groups in Britain look not for special favours, but for equality of opportunity. Liberal Democrats offer minority ethnic groups in Britain a real chance for real change.

Charles Kennedy, Leader of the Liberal Democrats

Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Ethnic Minorities

Contents

Equality and the Fight Against Racial Discrimination	4
Equality of Opportunity and the Public Services	6
Equality and the Legal System	8
Equality and Religion	10
Equality of Opportunity in the Economy	12
Equality of Opportunity World Wide	14

Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Ethnic Minorities

Equality and the Fight Against Racial Discrimination

Liberal Democrats will combat discrimination on the grounds of race and in all its other forms. We will:

- **Strengthen the fight against discrimination with an Equality Act.** This will fight unfair discrimination on whatever grounds, including race and religion. A new Equality Commission will be able to investigate potential breaches of the Act and take action in its own name. We will also create a separate Human Rights Commission to safeguard human rights.
- **Support recent European anti-discrimination legislation.** We will back measures under Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam on anti-discrimination, including race and employment legislation and action. This will allow British Citizens from ethnic minorities travelling or working in Europe to be protected from discrimination.

Immigrants are too often labelled as a problem for British society. Britain has benefited hugely from immigration, in the same way that many Britons who have emigrated have benefited from their experience. There are practical as well as humanitarian reasons for having a fair immigration system. The shortage of skilled workers in many fields means immigrants have an important contribution to make to British society. We will:

- **Free immigration laws from discrimination.** We will ensure that immigration policy is non-discriminatory in its application. We will reform current immigration laws so that families are not divided. We will also regularly review immigration policy, separate from our asylum obligations, including an assessment of skills needs of the country in an increasingly global economy. We will reverse the present Government's decision to charge fees for appealing family visit visa applications.

Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Ethnic Minorities

- **Protect people fleeing from persecution** by dealing with asylum applications fairly and more quickly. We will introduce fair benefits for asylum seekers to replace the demeaning voucher system. We will review the failing dispersal system, end any unnecessary restrictions on asylum seekers undertaking voluntary work and review restrictions on paid work by asylum seekers in their first six months. Recognising pressures on host communities, we will ensure that local services are adequately compensated for the cost of supporting asylum seekers. We will work with other countries to ensure that responsibilities are sensibly shared, and to seek a system which discourages illegal trafficking in people.



"The history of immigration is one of success for our country. The integration of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers has been truly remarkable. Their contribution is important and valued."

Lord Dholakia, President of the Liberal Democrats

Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Ethnic Minorities

Equality of Opportunity and the Public Services

Liberal Democrats believe that the top political priority for the people of Britain, regardless of their ethnic background, is to secure high levels of investment in the essential public services on which we all depend. Adequate funding of the public services are especially important for less advantaged communities, because this is the only way they will be able to secure fair access to a decent education and good quality healthcare. When public services are under-funded, it is the ethnic minorities who lose out most of all. Only the Liberal Democrats have a clear and costed commitment to make significant increases in the major public services. We will:

- **Provide improvements in education costing more than £3 billion a year**, funded by putting one penny on the basic rate of income tax.
- **Provide substantial immediate increases in pensions and raise investment in the NHS**, funded by setting a new top tax rate of 50% on income over £100,000 a year and by closing loopholes in Capital Gains Tax.

Liberal Democrats also recognise that some ethnic or religious groups have special needs or sensitivities which must be taken into account in the delivery of public services, particularly healthcare and education. In particular, we will:

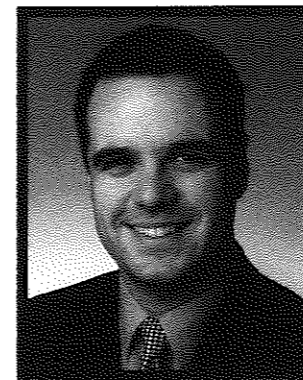
- **End the use of mixed sex wards** so that patients have more dignity when they are in hospital.
- **Promote a wider availability of complementary medicines and healthcare through the NHS** to take maximum advantage of different approaches to health.
- **Replace the National Curriculum with a less rigid Minimum Curriculum Entitlement which can be more sensitive to community preferences.** We will provide for a broad and balanced curriculum including languages, science, maths, the humanities, physical development (including sports instruction and advice on healthy eating), religious education, parenting, citizenship and creative arts.

Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Ethnic Minorities

- **Improve access for under-represented groups in Higher Education** by tripling the incentive payments for recruitment and retention of under-represented, mature and part-time students. We would pay colleges one-third on admission and two-thirds on completion of a course.

Liberal Democrats recognise the best way to ensure that the public services are sensitive to the needs of minority ethnic groups is to enhance political participation by and representation of this section of the community. To promote wider representation in political office, we will:

- **Secure fair votes for all national and local elections.** For Westminster, we support the system of AV+ as proposed by the Jenkins Commission as a first step. We will therefore put the Jenkins Commission's recommendations before the British people in a referendum at the earliest possible opportunity. Ultimately, we wish to see the Single Transferable Vote (STV) used for Westminster elections. We will introduce STV immediately for local government and European elections.
- **Include in our Equality Act provisions to permit political parties to employ proportionate positive measures** in their selection processes to remedy under-representation of one sex or of minority groups in public office.



"Our vision is to provide the right infrastructure, the right environment, the right opportunities - the right playing field - and then to set people free to shape their communities, shape their lives, celebrate their success. Because we are honest about the cost, we know we can deliver that opportunity. Because we trust the people, we know they will make those opportunities work."

**Matthew Taylor, Liberal Democrat Shadow
Chancellor of the Exchequer**

Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Ethnic Minorities

Equality and the Legal System

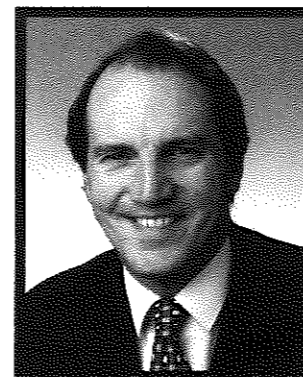
Good police relationships with the community are essential to effective policing. Relationships with ethnic minority communities have been particularly strained recently in the wake of the inquiry into the Stephen Lawrence murder investigation. Liberal Democrats support implementation of the positive recommendations of the Macpherson Report. We welcome the start that has been made, such as the Metropolitan Police's new race and ethnic task force, but recognise that much more needs to be done. We will:

- **Make the police more accountable.** Public confidence in the police has declined. As well as seeking to improve the visibility of the police and improving police relations with the community, we will create a genuinely independent police complaints system to deal with complaints speedily, efficiently and impartially. We will encourage police forces to be more representative of the communities they serve, and ensure that 'stop and search' is based on intelligence and attaches no relevance to the race or colour of those stopped by the police.
- **Tackle hate crimes.** We will establish police hate crime investigation units to coordinate information and action against racist and other hate crimes.

Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Ethnic Minorities

Liberal Democrats recognise that ethnic minorities also have concerns about the way in which the courts and the prison system treat ethnic minority citizens who come into contact with them. Ethnic minorities comprise a disproportionate share of the prison population. We will:

- **Retain jury trials** for middle ranking cases currently threatened by Labour's Mode of Trial Bill, so that defendants can choose to be tried by a jury representative of the community rather than a predominantly white magistracy, and restore the right to silence.



"For my constituents, and for those of many of us who represent multiracial communities, these are day-to-day issues. Twenty-five per cent. of my constituents are black or Asian. It is not just that many experience discrimination, and find that they have a greater chance of being excluded from school or doing less well there, or of being arrested or detained by the police, or of going to prison, or of being out of work. Nearly every week, people come to my surgery and tell me that they are being racially harassed, simply because of the colour of their skin."

Simon Hughes, Liberal Democrat Shadow Home Secretary

Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Ethnic Minorities

Equality and Religion

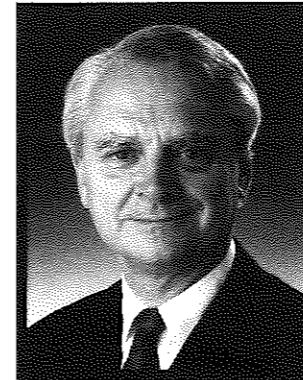
Liberal Democrats recognise that many cultural groups are defined by religious faith, rather than by ethnic group. The Runnymede Trust has produced a report on Islamophobia, but discrimination on the grounds of religion is not limited to Muslims. Religion can be one of the most important factors in determining how a person is seen by his or her colleagues and acquaintances, and so there needs to be adequate legislation, along the same lines as existing race legislation. We will:

- Introduce legislation protecting people from religious discrimination through our proposed Equality Act. This legislation should be equivalent to existing race discrimination legislation, subject to necessary exemptions and exceptions. It could also apply to those who claim they have been unfairly discriminated against on the basis of a lack of a particular religious belief.
- Include on census and other information-gathering questionnaires an *optional* question on religious faith or background. We would ensure that this information was used in the same way as information on ethnic background is currently used.

Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Ethnic Minorities

Liberal Democrats believe that there should be legal parity between all religions and religious groups and that no one religion or denomination should receive preferential treatment. We will:

- Abolish the existing Blasphemy Laws, which are discriminatory in their application.
- Create a source of funding and support for those groups which feel unable to accept lottery funding due to their beliefs.
- In the longer term, support the disestablishment of the Church of England.



"The purpose of our proposed Equality Act is to extend the life chances of people disadvantaged through belonging to groups discriminated against by British Society.

To right this wrong, and to make meaningful the concept of citizenship, of living in a civilised society, we need the statutory remedy of true and enforceable equality before the law."

Robert Maclennan, Liberal Democrat Shadow Cabinet Spokesperson on Constitutional Affairs

Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Ethnic Minorities

Equality of Opportunity in the Economy

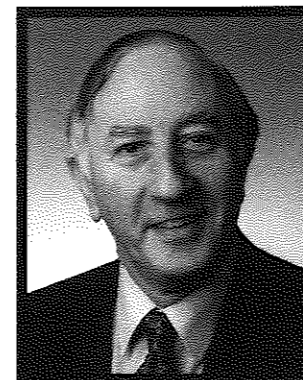
Ethnic minority communities often live in economically disadvantaged areas, characterised by low pay, poor housing, high unemployment and poor access to financial services. To boost the prosperity of these communities, we will:

- **Review the minimum wage annually.** The review will follow the recommendations of the Low Pay Commission. Equal work deserves equal pay, so we will also extend the full Minimum Wage to all those aged 16 and over, abolishing the lower rate paid to people under 21.
- **Remove taxation for the lowest paid.** We believe that people start paying tax at too low a level and will work to reduce the burden of taxation on the low paid. Over time, we will cut the 10p tax rate to zero. At present, this would take 1.4 million people on low incomes out of tax altogether.
- **Regenerate deprived communities wherever they are** through a one-stop Single Regeneration Grant system. This would streamline existing regeneration measures. We will ensure that all regeneration schemes are truly in line with the aspirations of the communities they are designed to help by strengthening local democratic input into decision-making.
- **Tackle financial exclusion** by promoting community banking, Local Exchange and Trading Schemes (LETS), and credit unions. We will reform the regulations governing credit unions to make it easier to run non-interest schemes for Muslims.

Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Ethnic Minorities

Self-employment and small business are a particularly important route to economic advancement for ethnic minorities. To help small businesses create wealth and employment, we will:

- **Scrap unnecessary business regulations.** We have published a list of 25 specific major regulations which we will scrap. We believe new regulations should where appropriate be subject to a "sunset clause", setting a deadline after which they would automatically lapse. We will also consult business before introducing any new measures.
- **Cut business rates on small businesses** by introducing a Business Rates Allowance, similar to personal tax allowances. This tax free allowance would be set at £1500 and apply to all small businesses. With larger businesses paying a little more to cover the cost of the scheme, smaller businesses will pay less.
- **Promote diversity of ownership.** We will initiate a review of policy governing mutual ownership of building societies, insurance companies and credit unions to encourage and develop them.



"In a fair society, business ownership must not be restricted to those with a particular background. The spirit of entrepreneurship should be nurtured in all sections of the community, everyone should be enabled to embark on their own enterprise regardless of age, ethnicity or gender."

Brian Cotter, Liberal Democrat Small Business Spokesperson

Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Ethnic Minorities

Equality of Opportunity World Wide

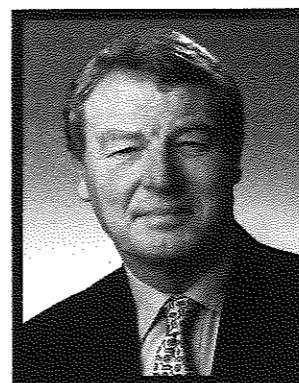
Britain's membership of the UN Security Council, the Commonwealth, the EU, NATO, and other global bodies gives us a key role in world affairs. But with power comes responsibility. We must not turn a blind eye to poverty, nor support authoritarian regimes which oppress their people and threaten world stability. Britain's influence should be used to fight for human rights and equitable and peaceful relationships between nations.

The Liberal Democrat approach puts democratic values, human rights and good governance at the top of the foreign policy agenda. We advocate effective aid policies to address the greatest problems of developing countries and promote democracy and good governance. We will:

- **Honour the UK's commitment to meet the UN target of increasing overseas aid to 0.7% over the next ten years.** We support the moves already made by the British Government to reduce the debts of the world's poorest countries. But Britain could take the lead in favour of more rapid action on debt relief by bodies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Their Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes should attach at least as much importance to governments taking action to tackle poverty as to liberalising their economies.
- **End links between aid and trade.** Tied aid is a form of protectionism which inhibits development. We will subject all aid programmes to thorough assessment for their environmental, social and human rights consequences.

Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Ethnic Minorities

- **Promote genuine liberal trade.** Trade underpins well-being throughout the world, but does not mean a right of the powerful to exploit the powerless, or make them more dependent. We want global trade to be based on rules and dispute settlement within the World Trade Organisation. But we also want WTO and EU rules to establish internationally recognised standards and labelling to allow consumers to exercise informed and ethical choice.
- **Press for a global competition authority within the WTO.** This would co-ordinate the anti-monopoly activities of individual nations in order to tackle the growing concentration of corporate monopoly power more effectively.
- **Work with Britain's partners in the Commonwealth** to make it more effective in promoting conflict resolution, good governance and democratic values.



"The fact is that in our increasingly interdependent world, the assertion "No man is an island" is moving from the status of moral precept to a statement of hard political reality. We can now only prosper, have a context of stability in which to live our lives and assure a safe environment for our children if we are prepared, not just to recognise our global interdependence on each other, but also give it some political form in effective structures which provide an element of global governance."

Sir Paddy Ashdown, former Leader of the Liberal Democrats

Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Ethnic Minorities

This document contains Federal Liberal Democrat policy, except in areas where policy of the Scottish and Welsh Liberal Democrats applies. A full costing document will be published at the same time as the General Election manifesto.

Promoted & published by Chris Rennard on behalf of the Liberal Democrats,
both at 4 Cowley Street, London, SW1P 3NB.

Printed by Contract Printing, 1 St James Road, St James Industrial Estate, Corby,
Northants, NN18 8AL