



Proposals in party manifestoes relating to the House of Lords

Responsible Board Member(s) N/A
Paper prepared by David Beamish

Date 13 April 2010

Summary: This paper provides Board members with quotations from the Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative parties' election manifestoes relating to the House of Lords.

Summary of actions requested:

- None

Labour manifesto (published 12 April 2010)

Page 0:5 –

We need fundamental reform of our politics to make it more accountable. We will let the people decide how to reform our institutions and our politics: changing the voting system and **electing a second chamber to replace the House of Lords**. But we will go further, introducing **fixed-term parliaments**, banning MPs from paid second jobs that pose a conflict of interest, and providing for a free vote in Parliament to widen the franchise to 16 and 17 year olds.

Pages 9:2 and 9:3 –

Cleaning up politics

We acted swiftly to clean up politics by creating an Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) to set pay and pensions for MPs, as well as their allowances. And we will take further measures to restore trust in our politics. MPs who are found responsible for financial misconduct will be subject to a right of recall if Parliament itself has failed to act against them. **The House of Lords and the new Second Chamber will be brought under the aegis of IPSA**. We will create a Statutory Register of Lobbyists to ensure complete transparency in their activities. We will ban MPs from working for generic lobbying companies and require those who want to take up paid outside appointments to seek approval from an independent body to avoid jobs that conflict with their responsibilities to the public.

But this is only the start. People want a greater say in how the country is governed and for politicians to be more accountable to those they serve. So while we are proud of our record of devolving power and reforming the constitution, we believe that further and more radical reform is imperative if we are to renew our democratic public life. Britain needs a new constitutional and political settlement for a new era.

A new politics

To begin the task of building a new politics, we will let the British people decide on whether to make Parliament more democratic and accountable **in referenda on reform of the House of Commons and House of Lords, to be held on the same day, by October 2011**.

To ensure that every MP is supported by the majority of their constituents voting at each election, we will hold a referendum on introducing the Alternative Vote for elections to the House of Commons.

We will ensure that the hereditary principle is removed from the House of Lords. Further democratic reform to create a fully elected Second Chamber will then be achieved in stages. At the end of the next Parliament one third of the House of Lords will be elected; a further one third of members will be elected at the general election after that. Until the final stage, the representation of all groups should be maintained in equal proportions to now. We will consult widely on these proposals, and on an open-list proportional representation electoral system for the Second Chamber, before putting them to the people in a referendum. To further strengthen our democracy and renew our constitution, we will legislate for Fixed Term Parliaments and set up an All Party Commission.

Conservative manifesto (published 13 April 2010)

Pages 65–7:

Make politics more accountable

We will clean up politics: the expenses, the lobbying and problems with party funding. We will cut the cost of Parliament, cut the number of MPs and cut Ministers' pay. We will give citizens direct control over what goes on in Westminster, make government more accountable and safeguard the independence of the civil service.

It is vital that we act quickly and decisively to restore the reputation of politics. Too much unacceptable behaviour has gone unchecked for too long, from excessive expenses to sleazy lobbying practices. The people of Britain have looked on in horror as revelations have stripped away the dignity of Parliament, leaving millions of voters detached from the political process, devoid of trust in the political classes, and disillusioned with our system of government.

We will act rapidly to push through far reaching reforms to restore ethics to politics and revive the electorate's faith in politicians. It will take nothing less than a deep clean of the political system in Westminster to root out the sleaze and dispel suspicion. We will start by cleaning up the expenses system to ensure MPs live by the same standards as the people who give them their jobs, and by curbing the way in which former Ministers have secured lobbying jobs by exploiting their contacts.

But that is just the start. We will also **cut Ministers' pay** and reduce the number of MPs in Parliament. Then we will go further far further, since the expenses scandal was just the trigger for a deeper sense of frustration. We promise a total overhaul of our system of government, so that power is passed from the politicians at Westminster back to the people of Britain. But this is the very least that is needed to fix our broken political system.

Clean up Westminster

The political crisis was triggered by the scandal of MPs' expenses. We were the Party that insisted that MPs' expenses were published online, and we have supported the independent proposals to clean up the House of Commons. We proposed legislation so that anyone wanting to be a member of either the House of Commons or the House of Lords will need to be treated as a full UK taxpayer. But much, much more is needed to clean up our politics and restore public trust.

At the moment, there is no way that local constituents can remove an MP found guilty of serious wrongdoing until there is a general election. That is why a Conservative government will introduce a power of 'recall' to allow electors to kick out MPs, a power that will be triggered by proven serious wrongdoing. And we will introduce a **Parliamentary Privilege Act** to make clear that privilege cannot be abused by MPs to evade justice.

The cost of politics has spiralled out of control. We will **cut the perks and bureaucracy associated with Parliament to save over £100 million a year**. We will consult with the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority on how to move away from the generous final-salary pension system for MPs. The public are concerned about the influence of money on politics, whether it is from trade unions, individuals, or the lobbying industry. We will seek an agreement on a comprehensive package of reform that will encourage individual donations and include an across the-board cap on donations. This will mark the end of the big donor era and the problems it has sometimes entailed.

A Conservative government will introduce new measures to ensure that the contacts and knowledge Ministers gain while being paid by the public to serve the public are not unfairly used for private gain. We will:

- ensure that ex-Ministers are banned from lobbying government for two years after leaving office;
- ensure that ex-Ministers have to seek advice on the business posts they take up for ten years after leaving office;
- rewrite the Ministerial Code to make clear that any former Minister who breaks the rules on appointments will be forced to give up some or all of their Ministerial pension; and,
- introduce new rules to stop central government bodies using public money to hire lobbyists to lobby other government bodies.

The lobbying industry must regulate itself to ensure its practices are transparent – if it does not, then we will legislate to do so.

Give citizens more power

People have been shut out of Westminster politics for too long. Having a single vote every four or five years is not good enough – we need to give people real control over how they are governed. So, with a Conservative government, any petition that secures 100,000 signatures will be eligible for formal debate in Parliament. The petition with the most signatures will enable members of the public to table a Bill eligible to be voted on in Parliament. And we will **introduce a new Public Reading Stage for Bills to give the public an opportunity to comment on proposed legislation online**. Labour have meddled shamelessly with the electoral system to try to gain political advantage. A Conservative government will ensure every vote will have equal value by introducing 'fair vote' reforms to equalise the size of constituency electorates, and conduct a boundary review to implement these changes within five years. We will swiftly implement individual voter registration, giving everyone the right to cast their vote in person and making it easier for UK citizens living overseas to vote.

We support the first-past-the-post system for Westminster elections because it gives voters the chance to kick out a government they are fed up with. **We will work to build a consensus for a mainly-elected second chamber to replace the current House of Lords, recognising that an efficient and effective second chamber should play an important role in our democracy and requires both legitimacy and public confidence.**

Make government more accountable and representative

Because we are serious about redistributing power, we will restore the balance between the government and Parliament, by:

- establishing a Backbench Business Committee to give the House of Commons more control over its own timetable;
- allowing MPs the time to scrutinise law effectively;
- providing more free votes, and protecting the principle that issues of conscience – like abortion – remain subject to a free vote; and,
- making the use of the Royal Prerogative subject to greater democratic control so that Parliament is properly involved in all big national decisions.

We will scrap Labour's failed target regime and instead require every department to publish a business plan, with senior management accountable to more rigorous departmental boards for their performance. We will make it easier to reward the best civil servants and remove the least effective. We will reform the Civil Service Compensation Scheme to bring it more into line with practice in the private sector. We will put a limit on the number of special advisers and protect the impartiality of the civil service.

Rebuilding trust in politics means making our political system better reflect the people it is meant to represent. We will introduce a £1 million fund to help people with disabilities who want to become MPs, councillors or other elected officials with the extra costs they face in running for office. This will be funded from the existing budget of the Government Equalities Office.

Liberal Democrat manifesto – published 14 April Pages 87 – 89

We want to see a fair and open political system, with power devolved to all the nations, communities, neighbourhoods and peoples of Britain.

As the expenses scandal showed, the political system is rotten. Hundreds of MPs have safe seats where they can ignore their constituents. Party funding rules mean big donors have huge influence. Power has been concentrated in Westminster and Whitehall by a succession of governments. And Britain's hard-won civil liberties have been eaten away.

Liberal Democrats will transform politics. We want people to be empowered, knowing the chance to change things in their neighbourhood or in the country as a whole is in their hands.

Liberal Democrats will:

- Change politics and abolish safe seats by introducing a fair, more proportional voting system for MPs. Our preferred Single Transferable Vote system gives people the choice between candidates as well as parties. Under the new system, we will be able to reduce the number of MPs by 150.
- Give the right to vote from age 16.
- Introduce fixed-term parliaments to ensure that the Prime Minister of the day cannot change the date of an election to suit themselves.
- Strengthen the House of Commons to increase accountability. We will increase Parliamentary scrutiny of the budget and of government appointments and give Parliament control over its own agenda so that all bills leaving the Commons have been fully debated.

- **Replace the House of Lords with a fully-elected second chamber with considerably fewer members than the current House.**
- Get better politics for less. Liberal Democrats would save this country nearly £2 billion by reforms that cut back waste in central government and the Houses of Parliament.
- Introduce a written constitution. We would give people the power to determine this constitution in a citizens' convention, subject to final approval in a referendum.
- Give you the right to sack MPs who have broken the rules. We would introduce a recall system so that constituents could force a byelection for any MP found responsible for serious wrongdoing. We are campaigning for this right of recall to be introduced to the European Parliament too.
- Get big money out of politics by capping donations at £10,000 and limiting spending throughout the electoral cycle.
- **Require all MPs, Lords and parliamentary candidates to be resident, ordinarily resident and domiciled in Britain for tax.**
- Curb the improper influence of lobbyists by introducing a statutory register of lobbyists, changing the Ministerial Code so that ministers and officials are forbidden from meeting MPs on issues where the MP is paid to lobby, requiring companies to declare how much they spend on lobbying in their annual reports, and introducing a statutory register of interests for parliamentary candidates based on the current Register of Members' Interests.

14 April 2010

DAVID BEAMISH