

15.10 Policy Motion: Lords Election by 2015

Chair: Cllr Chris Maines

Aide: Baroness Doocey AM (London)

Motion Clearly Carried (Amendments inserted into the motion are included in **bold text** below).

F4 Lords Elections by 2015

22 conference representatives and Islington

Mover: Lord Tyler

Summation: Mark Pack

Conference notes:

i) The commitment of Asquith's Liberal Government in the 1911 Parliament Act to "substitute for the House of Lords as it at present exists a Second Chamber constituted on a popular instead of hereditary basis" but that "such substitution [could not] be immediately brought into operation".

ii) The commitments of all three major UK parties in their 2010 manifestos to complete comprehensive reform of the House of Lords.

iii) Labour's three previous manifesto commitments to Lords reform in 1997, 2001 and 2005.

iv) The longstanding policies of the Liberal Democrats, and of our predecessor parties, in favour of a wholly or mainly elected Lords, demonstrated in repeated manifesto commitments.

v) That the Coalition Government is the first to honour its manifesto pledges on House of Lords reform by publishing a draft Bill and White Paper to bring democracy to the second chamber of Parliament.

vi) That women continue to be egregiously under-represented at Westminster, with men constituting four fifths of parliamentarians.

vii) The success of one-off zipping used by the party in 1999 in delivering sustained gender balance in the Liberal Democrat European Parliament group.

Conference congratulates Nick Clegg and David Cameron for making a joint commitment to elections in 2015, after 13 years of Labour dithering and failure. Conference condemns Labour's divided, opportunistic and hypocritical response.

Conference nevertheless expresses its disappointment at the Government's proposals to include the possibility of up to 20% of members being appointed and not elected; and reaffirms its commitment to previous conference motions and its 2010 Manifesto pledge to 'replace the House of Lords with a fully-elected second chamber'.

Conference believes that the White Paper proposals:

a) Will ensure neither heredity nor patronage determines who sits in Parliament.

- b) Retain the primacy of the House of Commons by leaving the Parliament Acts in place.
- c) Retain the best of the existing House's independent spirit and long-term thinking while allowing the public to choose those who legislate on their behalf.
- d) Will strengthen Parliament as a whole in its ability to check the power of the Executive.

Conference further believes that the Joint Committee on Lords Reform will need particularly to examine the issues of:

1. Gender balance and diversity in the new chamber.
2. The size of the House, the likely workload of its members, and its working practices.
3. Which proportional electoral system to use.
4. Whether or not to retain a small appointed element (**given that it is existing Liberal Democrat policy to have a 100% elected second chamber**).

Conference opposes, in the event of the retention of a small appointed element, any seats in Parliament being reserved for any group or individual on the basis of their beliefs, religious or otherwise.

With specific regard to gender balance, conference calls on Liberal Democrat parliamentarians to:

- i) **Ensure the reformed House begins its mandate with in-built gender balance.**
- ii) **Pilot modern flexible working practices in the reformed House.**
- iii) **Ensure any further interim appointments mitigate, rather than perpetuate, the current gender imbalance.**
- iv) **If an appointed element is retained, press for a transparent skills and competency based approach to new appointments.**

Conference welcomes the Joint Committee's commitment to constructive pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Bill and congratulates the Government on being the first to bring forward legislation after a century of broken promises by previous administrations.

Conference reaffirms its commitment to longstanding party policy, and to repeated manifesto commitments, in favour of an elected House of Lords and calls on Parliament to ensure that legislation is in place to make Lords elections happen in 2015.

Applicability: Federal.