

Conference calls on the Government to:

- 1 Amend the 1995 Act to:
 - a) Allow Park Authorities to incur expenditure in pursuit of the "duty".
 - b) Ensure a majority of members of National Parks are directly elected by the residents of each Park.
- 2 Ensure National Park Authorities have sufficient resources to carry out this duty; the special problems of National Parks should be specifically recognised in the criteria for regional aid and national community development initiatives.
- 3 Encourage National Park Authorities, in conjunction with local Housing Authorities, to prepare positive plans for meeting local housing need within the Parks, rather than dealing with such needs as exceptions to policy, as they are obliged to do at present.
- 4 Lobby within the EU for these issues to be recognised in the allocation of European regional and social funds.

Background Briefing: Federal Policy Paper 5, Reclaiming the Countryside, was adopted at Autumn Conference 1994. Reclaiming the Countryside supported the recommendations of the Edwards Report, 'Fit For The Future', to give independent status to the National Park Authorities with responsibility for development planning, conservation and environmental matters. It called for the National Park Authorities to include representatives from local government and to consider the well-being of local communities, farmers and landowners within the Parks.

This motion takes account of the 1995 Environment Act and calls on the Government to amend the Act to ensure that National Park Authorities are properly funded and are accountable to local communities through directly elected representatives.

Business Motions

No Glass Ceilings (Party Positioning and Tactics Paper)

Conference welcomes the Party positioning and tactics paper *No Glass Ceilings*.

Conference notes:

- a) The success of our strategy in the last Parliament which resulted in the election of more Liberal Democrat than Conservative Councillors, the breakthrough into the European

Parliament and the election of 46 Liberal Democrat Members of Parliament; our strategic positioning was confirmed by the 1995 Federal Conference in Glasgow.

- b) The Party's success during this Parliament in obtaining long-standing Liberal Democrat objectives such as the creation of a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly, PR for these elections and for the European Parliament, the establishment of the Electoral Commission on an alternative proportional system for Westminster elections, the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into British law and progress on legislation for Freedom of Information.
- c) That the Liberal Democrats have become the only effective opposition in Parliament campaigning for better provision of public services such as education and health and a welfare system that protects the poor.
- d) The success of the Liberal Democrat MPs in pursuing this strategy of "constructive opposition" in Parliament, and the centrality of this strategy to the achievements outlined above.

Conference resolves:

- 1 To continue this strategy based upon the Party's independence and distinctiveness, being prepared to work with others at local and national level where we agree and to oppose where we disagree.
- 2 That one of our important aims is to complete the task begun in May 1997, of the Liberal Democrats replacing the discredited, reactionary Conservative Party as the official Opposition as a step to the strategic goal of a genuinely liberal and radical Liberal Democrat Government.
- 3 That any expansion of the subjects covered by the joint Cabinet Committee will only be carried out after a genuine consultation with the Party and the express consent of the Parliamentary Party.
- 4 That we will seek to involve those from all other parties who support constitutional reform and a more liberal and democratic Europe in the current constitutional reform process.
- 5 To commit the Party to campaigning vigorously to bring to an end to the undemocratic First Past the Post system of voting and replace it with a proportional system, preferably the Single Transferable Vote.

Conference notes the absence of specific constitutional provisions which clearly define the Party's approach to gaining positive consent to proposals for an important change in strategy or positioning;

Conference agrees that:

- i) in the event of any substantial proposal which could affect the Party's independence of political action, the consent will be required of a majority of members of the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons and the Federal Executive; *and*
- ii) unless there is a three-quarters majority of each group in favour of the proposals, the consent of the majority of those present and voting at a Special Conference convened under clause 6.6 of the Constitution; *and*
- iii) unless there is a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at that Conference in favour of the proposals, the consent of a majority of all members of the Party voting in the ballot called pursuant to clause 6.11 or 8.6 of the Constitution.

Background Briefing: No Glass Ceilings was produced by the Federal Executive in response to the consultative session on Party Development at the Eastbourne Conference of September 1997.

Election & Donations Regulations

Conference approved the following rules on party donations:

Rules for Party Donations

General Principles:

- 1 The rules are designed to ensure that all significant donations to the Party are transparent.
- 2 It is axiomatic that irrespective of transparency the policy of the party remains that no donation is accepted where the motive of the donor is to obtain influence or position or where acceptance of the donation might bring the Party into disrepute.
- 3 Rules apply to all donations from 1st January 1998.
- 4 Rules apply to all donations given for political purposes to any organ of the Party or to any officer or individual. Specifically but without limitation this means that donations to the following are covered:

The Federal Party, State or Regional Parties
Constituencies or Wards, SAO's
The Leader's office or POLD
Any MEP, MP, Councillor or any Candidate
for any such position
Any Candidate for any office in the Party
Any election fund or any other fund established
by any of the above

Rules:

- 1 Any donation of £1,000 or more must be notified within 30 days of receipt to the Chief Executive indicating the amount of the donation and the name of the donor.
- 2 The Chief Executive will maintain a register in hard copy and electronic form of the amount of the donation and the identity of the donor. This register will be available to the Press and Public and will be kept up to date.
- 3 The register will record donations in bands as follows indicating the name of the donor:

£1000 - 4999
£5000 - 9999
£10000 - 24999
£25000 - 49999
£50000 - 99999
£100000 - 249999
£250000 - 999999
Over £1 million

4 In addition these rules will apply to loans of £10000 made on terms that they are for a period in excess of one year and to tangible or quantifiable donations in kind.

5 These rules will be supplemented by any additional requirements imposed by law except that to the extent that these rules require greater disclosure than required by law these rules will prevail.

Federal Election Regulations

Conference approved the following changes to the regulations for Federal Committee Elections:

In regulation 4, line 5 add a comma after "incur", and then insert: "or directly or indirectly authorise or cause to be incurred"

In regulation 8, at end add a comma and then add: "but shall not exercise such power without first offering any such candidate the right to make representation, and having regard thereto."

In regulation 11, at end add a comma and then add: "but shall not do so without first offering any such candidate the right to make representation, and having regard thereto."

At end, add new regulation 13:

13 If a complaint is made prior to the declaration of the result, the Returning Officer shall have the power to postpone such declaration until the determination of such complaint or, where an appeal is made against his decision, until the determination of such appeal.