



LIBERAL REFORM

YORK 2017
BRIEFING



JULIA EBNER



SIR NICK HARVEY



BARONESS JUDITH JOLLY

Fringe event - Saturday 18th March 6.15-7.15pm - Hilton - Micklethwait Rm

NATO IN THE ERA OF TRUMP, PUTIN, CORBYN AND BREXIT

Do Brexit, Trump and the rise of populism in Europe signal a disintegration of western institutions? Has NATO become irrelevant or do we need it more than ever at a time of Russian expansionism? Join us with **Sir Nick Harvey**, **Baroness Judith Jolly** and **Julia Ebner** (Quilliam Foundation). Chaired by Liberal Reform Board Member, **Nick Thornsbey**.



LIBERAL REFORM DRINKS Saturday 18th March 7.30pm onwards

We will be meeting for informal drinks in the bar of the Hilton from 7.30pm onwards on Saturday. Please come and say hello. We would be interested in your thoughts on the party's position and the role LR can play in its future.

LIBERAL REFORM CONFERENCE BRIEFING - MOTIONS

F4: A Rational Approach to Harm Reduction

We support this motion as we think people should be free to do what they like with their bodies - as long as it is their choice. However, we think that the motion (which references a list of offences specified in the Working Group paper) errs in calling for kerb crawling to be decriminalised and past offences quashed. Liberal Reform is supporting an amendment calling for kerb crawling to be removed from the list which we hope the FCC will take.

F7: Europe

Subscribe to our emails at <http://www.liberalreform.org.uk/briefing> for a briefing on this item, once the text becomes available.

F5 Prison overcrowding

The intentions of this motion are admirable and we support it, even if it would have been good to see recognition that for some criminals, keeping them off the streets and not harming others is an important part of the reason they have been imprisoned. The motion's emphasis on rehabilitation and decriminalisation of drugs is welcome, as convicting fewer people for low-level drug offences and lowering the rate of recidivism in the prison population is necessary if we are going to be 'tough on crime' in a way that reflects evidence and liberal values.

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DISCUSSION PAPERS

F8 The Crisis in Health and Social Care

The Party has made its position on the NHS - that it needs more money - very clear. While the motion says this, we are surprised that there was not a call for an explicit mechanism for providing the additional funding. As the Budget showed that people are reluctant to pay higher taxes, we think that a '1p on income tax for the NHS' style campaign might make the collection of the funds needed more palatable. Whilst recognising the need for health spending to keep pace with demographic and medical changes, we continue to hope for a party policy that thinks in more radical ways about the best operation of a liberal health system in the 21st century.

We also have some concern that saying all EU citizens working in the NHS should be allowed to stay in the UK runs the risk of people thinking we don't think all EU citizens already here should be allowed to stay. We hope the FCC accepts an amendment clarifying this.

F11 Trident

This is not the time, in the face of a belligerent Russia and a wavering USA, to abandon a key plank of our security and of our contribution to the NATO alliance and the security of our European allies. It is also politically inept to compete with Corbyn for a tiny segment of public opinion. We should therefore have policy to keep a credible nuclear deterrent and reject any unilateralist amendment.

F16 The role of faith in State-funded schools

This motion outlines a set of quite reasonable constraints upon state-funded faith schools (i.e. that children have the right to opt-out of religious activities), and then presents three options for the more controversial issue of student selection by faith. While the equal treatment of all religions and atheism is a good secular liberal principle, it is politically unwise to be seen to be attacking religious institutions even where they do enjoy privileges. Even secular liberalism should not demand that all schools be secular, but rather that there should be room for diversity and choice in the school system, so long as this is not cover for discrimination, and every student's rights are respected. We therefore hope the motion is passed with Option B.

F17 Associate Citizenship of the European Union

This is a welcome initiative to maintain a closer relationship between the UK and EU, and to replace some of the rights UK citizens are due to lose. The proposed associate EU citizenship is perhaps better described as a privilege rather than a right, reflecting UK citizens' weaker post-Brexit position.

21st Century Economy

There is much that is useful in this paper, but it is unconvincing on two points: First, it is not possible to have a convincing strategy for the economy without an appreciation for the role of markets. Secondly, on the environmental message it slips into woolly wishful thinking where we ought to be rational, evidence-based and focused. For alternative views see our pamphlet on the sharing economy available as a hard copy at exhibition stall 21 or at <http://www.liberalreform.org.uk> - where you can also find our environment pamphlet.

Britain in the World

Important work on the EU, NATO and international institutions. We have some scepticism of the Sustainable Development Goals - they are not as focused and measurable as the Millennium Development Goals were.

Education

This paper is weak on the question of raising standards across the board. As a party we believe in the importance of education, and it follows from this that we believe it is important that it is done better.

Rural Communities

A wide ranging paper covering transport, broadband, housing, planning, tourism, the economy and agriculture, from a rural perspective. Perhaps this kind of omnibus paper could be usefully written for seaside towns, the urban north, and other areas whose voice is little heard.

Visit Liberal Reform - Stall 21



You can pick up copies of our pamphlets on the sharing economy and environmental policy at stand 21 in the exhibition area. You can also take part in a competition to win a copy of the Orange Book signed by many of its original contributors including **Nick Clegg, David Laws** and **Susan Kramer**.

