

GOOD MORNING, LET ME START BY THANKING THE MESIVTA LIB DEM CAMPAIGN TEAM FOR ALL THEIR ENDEAVOURS. I DON'T KNOW IF I BENEFITED FROM BEING THE PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE LIVING CLOSEST TO SCHOOL, BUT NEVERTHELESS IT IS ALWAYS A PLEASURE WHEN PEOPLE CALL ROUND AT MY HOME REQUESTING POSTERS AND CAMPAIGN MATERIAL FOR THE LIB DEMS. SADLY I HAVE TO REPORT THAT THIS ISN'T USUALLY THE CASE. SUCH IS THE GENERAL LEVEL OF APATHY AND DISENCHANTMENT WITH POLITICS.

I MUST ALSO THANK THE ORGANISERS FOR ARRANGING THIS HUSTINGS MEETING AND INDEED FOR ORGANISING THIS MOCK ELECTION.

AT A TIME WHEN OUR DEMOCRACY IS AILING, AND POLITICIANS ARE NOW HELD IN LOWER PUBLIC REGARD THAN ESTATE AGENTS IT IS INDEED A DELIGHT TO SEE YOUNG PEOPLE, OUR COUNTRIES FUTURE, ENGAGING IN A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT AND DUTY OF BRITISH CITIZENSHIP.

I HOPE ALL THOSE INVOLVED HAVE ENJOYED THE EXPERIENCE BUT HAVE ALSO REALISED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS AND THE NECESSARY END PRODUCT. I ASSUME YOU ARE CARRYING OUT YOUR ELECTION UNDER THE CURRENT FIRST PAST THE POST SYSTEM. I TRUST YOU WILL NOTE THE INTRINSIC UNFAIRNESS BUILT INTO THAT SYSTEM.

SO THE QUESTION HAS TO BE ASKED, WHY IS IT THAT BRITAIN IS STILL USING VIRTUALLY UNCHANGED A SYSTEM OF ELECTION THAT DISTORTS PUBLIC OPINION AND REGULARLY HANDS TOTAL POWER TO POLITICAL PARTIES THAT GAIN MUCH LESS THAN 50% OF THE VOTES CAST?

WHY IS THAT OUR GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT STILL OPERATES IN WAYS LARGELY UNCHANGED FROM THE HEIGHT OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE 150 YEARS AGO?

WESTMINSTER MAY BE THE MOTHER OF PARLIAMENTS BUT I THINK ITS TIME FOR A MAKEOVER. AND FOLLOWING THE EXPENSES SCANDAL REFORM IS NOW ESSENTIAL.

BUT AMIDST THE PUBLIC DEMANDS FOR REFORM AND RENEWAL, THE TWO OLD PARTIES REMAIN WEDDED TO THE PAST, OFFERING BITS AND PIECES LIKE OFFERINGS AT A PAUPERS TABLE.

IT'S LIKE WATCHING A GIANT POLITICAL PENDULUM IN ACTION. WHILE LABOUR ARE IN POWER THE CONSERVATIVES JUST SIT BACK, CRITICISE, SHOUT FROM THEIR SIDE OF THE TRACKS AND AWAIT THEIR TURN. THEN WHEN THE CAMPAIGN STARTS THEY ENTER THE FRAY WITH UTTER CONVICTION THAT IT'S THEIR TURN, TIME FOR A CHANGE THEY SAY.

IT'S THE SAME OLD SICK MAN WITH A DIFFERENT COLOURED COAT, THAT'S ALL.

CONSIDER THIS. THE CONSERVATIVES AND LABOUR (WITH A BRIEF INTERLUDE) ARE THE ONLY POLITICAL PARTIES TO HAVE FORMED THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UK OVER THE PAST 65 YEARS.

ANOTHER FACT, A FACT THAT IS EVEN MORE STARTLING. NEARLY HALF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN THIS COUNTRY HAVE BEEN REPRESENTED AT PARLIAMENT BY ONLY ONE PARTY OVER THE PAST 40 YEARS.

IMAGINE IF THE PREMIER LEAGUE HAD BEEN WON BY CHELSEA OR MAN UTD EVERY YEAR FOR 65 YEARS? IMAGINE IF YOU WERE A MAN CITY FAN? IVAN.

BUT IN ALL SERIOUSNESS IT MEANS THAT THERE ARE IN EFFECT MILLIONS OF BRITISH CITIZENS THAT MIGHT AS WELL NOT BOTHER VOTING, BECAUSE THEIR VOTE JUST DOES NOT COUNT – THAT IS BAD FOR DEMOCRACY AND EVEN WORSE FOR THE QUALITY OF REPRESENTATION IN OUR PARLIAMENT.

AND ONE WONDERS ON THE IMPACT ON POLICY MAKING BY GOVERNMENTS AS AN ULTIMATE RESULT. WELL THAT'S THE BAD NEWS, THE GOOD NEWS IS POLITICS IN BRITAIN IS CHANGING. OVER THE PAST 30 YEARS MORE AND MORE VOTES HAVE BEEN CAST FOR ANYBODY BUT THE LABSERVATIVES AS MORE AND MORE PEOPLE TURN AWAY FROM THE TWO OLD FAILED PARTIES. THERE IS A QUIET AND TYPICALLY SLOW REVOLUTION GOING ON – I JUST WISH IT WOULD SPEED UP A BIT.

THIS ELECTION COULD WELL BE ONE OF THOSE MEMENTOUS ELECTIONS THAT FUNDAMENTALLY SHAKE THE POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS WITH FAR REACHING IMPLICATIONS FOR GENERATIONS TO COME. SUCH AS WITH THE ELECTIONS OF 1906, 1945 AND 1979.

WITH A BACKGROUND OF DISTRUST FOLLOWING THE MP'S EXPENSES SCANDAL, ANGER ABOUT THE INVASION OF IRAQ, THE GROWING GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR AND THE FAILURE TO REGULATE THE BANKS AND LIMIT BORROWING AMONGST OTHER THINGS.

PEOPLE ARE FED UP WITH POLITICS – THEY DON'T TRUST US, THEY DON'T LIKE US, THEY THINK WE'RE ALL IN IT FOR OURSELVES.

WITH THAT BACKGROUND THE PERFECT SITUATION IS COMING TOGETHER. WE NEED AND THE LIB DEMS PROPOSE RADICAL MEASURES TO RESTORE TRUST – THE RIGHT TO RECALL AND SACK YOUR MP FOR SERIOUS WRONG DOING, OPEN AND TRANSPARENT EXPENSES ETC FOR MP'S, THE DEMOCRATISATION OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS AND YES, FAIR VOTING FOR ELECTIONS.

THE MOOD HAS CHANGED , PEOPLE ARE SAYING ENOUGH IS ENOUGH, THEY ARE USING THEIR VOTES TO MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN.

BUT WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE YOU LOT HEAR TODAY, WELL OK YOU HAVEN'T GOT THE VOTE – YET, BUT YOU'VE GOT HOPES, FEARS, ASPIRATIONS AND AMBITION. AND WHATEVER YOU CURRENTLY THINK OF

YOUR SCHOOL, DEEP DOWN YOU ACCEPT THAT ITS PREPARING YOU FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF LIFE. WELL OK YOU MIGHT NOT ACCEPT IT, BUT IT REALLY IS. MR PINK SAID SO.

YOU ARE THE FUTURE OF YOUR COMMUNITY, YOU ARE THE FUTURE OF THIS COUNTRY. YOU HAVE DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, AND IN RETURN THE GOVERNMENT OF THIS LAND HAS DUTIES TOWARDS YOU.

I BELIEVE WE HAVE A DUTY OF CARE , A DUTY TO NURTURE AND TO PROVIDE THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH YOU WILL DEVELOP, AN ENVIRONMENT THAT ENABLES YOU TO FULFILL YOUR HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS AND PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH LIFE.

THAT'S WHY WE START WITH THE YOUNGEST CHILDREN IN DEMANDING SMALL CLASS SIZES, THAT'S WHY WE ARE PLEDGED TO SCRAP TUITION FEES FOR UNIVERSITY AS IN SCOTLAND, THAT'S WHY THE LIB DEMS WOULD FUND 15,000 NEW PLACES ON FOUNDATION DEGREE COURSES AND FULLY FUND THE OFF-THE-JOB COSTS OF ADULT APPRENTICESHIPS.

AND ULTIMATELY THAT'S WHY WE WOULD GIVE YOU THE VOTE AT AGE 16. WE BELIEVE IF YOU ARE OLD ENOUGH TO WORK AND PAY TAXES THEN YOU ARE OLD ENOUGH TO TAKE YOUR PLACE AS A CITIZEN IN SOCIETY IN OUR COMMUNITIES AND PLAY YOUR PART IN VOTING FOR YOUR REPRESENTATIVES AT WESTMINSTER AND THE TOWN HALL.

BRITAIN FACES DIFFICULT CHALLENGES IN DIFFICULT TIMES IN AN EVER MORE GLOBAL ECONOMY. WE HAVE TO CHANGE, WE HAVE TO ADAPT.

WE NEED TO RESTORE TRUST IN OUR PARLIAMENT.

FUNDAMENTALLY WE NEED A FAIR SOCIETY. A SOCIETY WHERE WE PAY FAIR TAXES TO FINANCE OUR PUBLIC SERVICES, WHERE WE CAN EXPECT OUR CHILDREN TO HAVE A FAIR CHANCE IN LIFE, WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO ACHIEVE AND FULFILL THEIR TALENTS AND POTENTIAL. AND A FAIR FUTURE – DEVELOPING THE GREEN ECONOMY,

A BANKING SYSTEM THAT IS FAIR TO BUSINESS AND SUSTAINABLE AND A GOVERNMENT THAT IS OPEN AND HONEST ABOUT THE TOUGH CHOICES THAT BRITAIN NEEDS TO MAKE.

THAT'S WHY I BELIEVE INCREASINGLY AT THIS ELECTION THE BRITISH PEOPLE ARE TURNING AWAY FROM LABOUR AND THE CONSERVATIVES – THE TWO OLD FAILED PARTIES. AND INSTEAD ARE PLACING THEIR HOPES IN THE LIB DEMS.

WE OFFER FREEDOM, HOPE AND FAIRNESS, CHANGES THAT WORK FOR YOU.

VOTE LIB DEM FOR A BETTER BRITAIN AND A FRESH START FOR BURY.