

“Liberales is a new independent think tank within the Flemish liberal movement. Its members consider liberalism as a progressive movement supporting individual freedom, justice and human rights. Liberales reacts against narrow minded conservatism related to social economic, ecological and ethical issues supported by compartmentalized parties and structures.

Liberales addresses to everyone who believes in freedom, openness and creativity as the motor for more wealth and well-being.”

Liberales' Oxford Manifesto

July 7 2007

St-Edmund Hall – Oxford

Motivation

Sixty years ago, on April 14th 1947, liberals from 19 countries (*) founded the International Liberal Conference at Wadham College in Oxford, U.K. The meeting drafted a Manifesto that would serve as the ideological foundation for the post war European Liberalism. The famous “Oxford Manifesto” still serves as the foundation for modern liberalism and is seen as a fundament for the liberal ideology. When the manifesto was written, it expressed a social and progressive liberalism, based upon the ideas of Lord Beveridge and being an alternative to the hierarchic and controlling socialism.

Meanwhile, we have progressed 60 years facing new challenges. The core members of the independent think tank Liberales met at July 7th 2007 in the St. Edmund Hall in Oxford and drafted an actualised “Liberales ‘Oxford Manifesto’”.

(*) These nineteen countries were Austria, Belgium, Canada, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungaria, Italy, Norway, Spain, South Africa, Sweden, Swiss, Turkey and the United States of America

Manifesto

We, Liberals assembled at Oxford in times of unprecedented opportunities but threatened by a

reviving nationalism, religious fanaticism and environmental threats;

Convinced that this condition of the world is largely due to the abandonment of liberal principles;

Affirm our faith in this Declaration:

I

1. Man is firstly and foremost a being endowed with the power of independent thought and action, and with the ability to distinguish right from wrong.

2. Respect for every individual person and the duty towards our fellow man are the true cornerstone of society.

3. The State is only the instrument of the community; it should assume no power which conflicts with the fundamental rights of the citizens and with the conditions essential for a responsible and creative life, namely:

- personal freedom, guaranteed by an independent judicial power;
- freedom of worship and liberty of conscience;
- freedom of speech and freedom of press;
- freedom to associate or not to associate,
- free choice of occupation,

- the opportunity of a full and varied education according to ability and irrespective of birth or mean;
- the right to have private ownership and the right to embark on individual enterprise;
- consumer's free choice and the opportunity to reap the full benefit of the productivity of the soil and the industry of man;
- security from the hazards of sickness, unemployment, disability and old age;
- equality of rights between men and women

4. These rights and conditions can be secured only by true democracy. True democracy is inseparable from political liberty and is based on the conscious, free and enlightened consent of the majority, expressed through a free and secret ballot, with due respect for the liberties and opinions of minorities.

II

1. The suppression of economic freedom must lead to the disappearance of political freedom. We oppose such suppression, whether brought about by State ownership or control or by private monopolies, cartels and trusts. We admit State ownership only for those undertakings which are beyond the scope of private enterprise or in which competition no longer plays its part.

2. The welfare of the community must prevail and must be safeguarded from the abuse of power by sectional interests.

3. A continuous betterment of the conditions of employment, and of the housing and environment of the workers is essential. The rights, duties and interests of labor and capital are complementary; organized consultation and collaboration between employers and employed is vital to the well-being of economy.

III

Responsibility is the necessary complement of freedom and every right involves a corresponding duty. If free institutions are to work effectively, every citizen must have a sense of moral responsibility towards his fellow men and take an active part in the affairs of the community.

IV

War can be abolished and world peace and economic prosperity restored only if all nations fulfill the following conditions:

- a)** Loyal adherence to a world organization of all nations, great and small, under the same law and equity, and with power to enforce strict observance of all international obligations freely entered into;
- b)** Respect for the rights and liberties of each individual, based upon a universal secular moral;

c) Respect for the language, the belief, the laws and traditions of minorities provided that they don't conflict with the universal human rights;

d) The free exchange of ideas, news, goods and services, as well as freedom of travel within and between countries, unhampered by censorship and trade barriers;

e) The development of the backward areas of the world, with the collaboration of their inhabitants, in their true interests and in the interests of the world at large. The decrease of every form of protectionism and the support of globalization within an ethical frame;

f) A global approach of the environmental problems to free the rights of the future generations;

We call upon all men and women who are in general agreement with these ideals and principles to join us in an endeavour to win their acceptance throughout the world.

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The Liberales core members

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