

# NEW DECLARATION

*The Common Good in the National Interest*



The Social Democratic Party

# NEW DECLARATION

*The Common Good in the National Interest*

*It's now 37 years since the publication  
of the 1981 'Limehouse Declaration' which  
led to the creation of the SDP.*

*In early 2018 the enduring SDP's National  
Committee commissioned a 'New Declaration'  
aimed at reviving social democracy in the UK.*

*We offer warmest thanks to the academics, writers  
and parliamentarians who have assisted us.*

**William Clouston**, Party Leader  
November 2018



The Social Democratic Party

## INDEPENDENCE

Free from vested interests, the SDP seeks the common good in Britain's national interest. We represent neither capital nor labour, not private industry nor the public sector, but only the welfare of the British people and residents of these islands. We seek a path where all the constituent elements of our society can grow and prosper.

---

## DEMOCRACY

First and foremost, we are democrats. The scale and vehemence of the reaction against the result of the 2016 EU referendum by Britain's cultural and political elites was striking. The evident disdain of the Westminster class for, among others, many elderly and low income voters revealed that the powerful only tolerate democracy when their view prevails. The authority of the establishment to decide what happens has been challenged and the SDP stands behind the referendum mandate. Respect for all voters implies respect for the result.

We hold that the old Labour/Conservative duopoly is harming our nation. The Conservative party has conserved very little and instead, has put everything up for sale. Labour has abandoned the nation's working men and women. To preserve what is best in our nation Westminster must change.

Our outdated voting system stifles political competition and denies new entrants a chance to contribute. As a result, people rightly feel powerless, with their voices ignored at Westminster. Reform of Britain's broken political system is long overdue, and we will be at the forefront of reinvigorating democratic politics.

We hold that public services such as education and the NHS have been badly let down by the two-party system. Labour and Conservative governments have produced wild swings in expenditure with periods of unsustainable spending followed by periods of austerity.

We consider the nation-state to be the upper limit of democracy. Along with the family, we regard it as indispensable to the solidarity of our society and concern for our fellow citizens. We regard supranationalism as a neoliberal ideology aimed at neutering domestic politics and placing the most important issues beyond the reach of ordinary voters. The European Union or any other supranational entity is not – and will never be – a social democratic enterprise.

## NATION AND WORLD

We are unionist, patriotic and internationalist. The ecological and demographic challenges of the 21st century require international coordination, and Britain must play a leading and constructive role within the UN, NATO, the WTO and the Commonwealth. However, Western powers must learn to respect sovereign frontiers. While showing solidarity with democrats everywhere we oppose the disastrous attempts to impose liberal democracy on complex societies in the Middle East via military intervention.

We are committed to maintaining strong, independent Armed Forces and Intelligence Services to protect our country against external military and nuclear threats as well as from terrorism and cyber-warfare.

We consider the progressive desire for people to shed their national identities and unite in a pan-European or universal civilisation to be a recipe for conflict and hopelessly utopian – as unrealistic and harmful as the dismal communist project.

Europe's strength is the diversity and distinctiveness of its local, regional and national cultures, which enhance our sense of place and our security, and provide mutuality and meaning to our lives. We believe the homogenisation of national differences and weakening of local cultures by both unchecked capitalism and utopian idealism is dangerous to both individuals and society, rendering them less stable, less happy and less resilient to crisis.

We cherish heterogeneity between nations and regard the peaceful coexistence of different cultures as a fundamental social democratic goal. The nation-state, the national home we have built and defended over centuries, reflects a deep and genuine human need for belonging, and realistic international policy must champion this.

We will vigorously resist the naive ambitions of both 'open border' zealots and neoliberal ideologues in the interest of Britain's community relations and the survival of our hard-won welfare state. Britain's immigration policy must be skills-based, needs-based, legal and subject to democratic control.

We believe the UK must lead by example in being at the forefront of global action to combat climate change and pollution from plastics and other sources. Government must incentivise business to develop new environmentally friendly technologies. We believe that animals are sentient beings and we are committed to the highest standards of animal welfare.

## SOCIAL MARKET ECONOMY

We believe that pro-public sector and pro-market policy can beneficially coexist within a balanced programme – provided each inhabits its correct domain, and neither is allowed to distort our country’s economy in the service of ideology. This is the SDP’s distinct Social Market position.

The public and private sectors are complementary parts of our society and should not be regarded as opponents. We believe that open, competitive, free markets are the best and most efficient system for providing general goods and services, the ordinary matters of trade which are our nation’s lifeblood. We believe that free markets make a vital contribution to a successful economy through investment, by creating employment and by raising living standards. Government must ensure such markets thrive. However, successive governments of both Right and Left have forgotten that markets are justified by their social function. The power of the market has over-reached, fraying the social bonds which bind us together.

Britain’s increasing inequality and the tendency for markets to be dominated by fewer but larger corporations is troubling – as is the avoidance of taxes morally owed to society. This must be corrected. Businesses, the wealthy and all other members of society must behave responsibly and pay their taxes – although in a geographically mobile world, tax rates should not be set so high as to be self-defeating. The market will either be reformed by social democrats who are friendly to it or be undermined by those who are not.

We support an active Industrial Policy. Britain urgently needs a strategy to improve productivity and to provide a long-term planning framework for the skills, technologies, energy resources and transport infrastructure required to support businesses.

A weak, inept state, fearful of powerful global corporations, cannot serve its citizens properly. We believe the state has wrongly ceded key parts of its rightful domain to global capital and has lost confidence in its own capacity for direct provision and intervention in the service of the nation. We believe that out-sourcing – as a tool to avoid democratic responsibility – has strayed well beyond its useful limits.

The correct frontier between the public and private sector is determinable. Natural monopolies – the utilities requiring universal delivery to citizens – should be returned to public ownership and operation or be subjected to significantly more effective regulation. The dismantling by both Labour and the Conservatives of public sector capacity in public housing, rail transport and the utilities – and the selling off of the nation’s assets to foreign ownership – is a historic mistake we must rectify. An optimal Social Market frontier must be restored and respected.

We believe that intergenerational equity requires that the constraints of sound government finance are respected. There is nothing moral in leaving future generations with unmanageable debt. On the contrary, it is anti-social.

## THE FAMILY

We believe a stable and secure family life – with support from the extended family and the community – to be the foundation of society and critical to raising responsible citizens. It is in the home where we first learn the virtues of obligation, compassion and concern for others which transcend self-interest. And yet successive governments have been powerless in resisting an epidemic of family breakdown which has caused widespread suffering and has harmed the life-chances of millions of children.

Government must defend and support family life whenever possible, particularly in welfare and economic policy, education and housing. We will shelter British families from the economic and social pressures fracturing our society, and rebuild a prosperous and happier nation with policies that place the working family at the heart of national life.

## COMMUNITY

We believe in a more equal society, free of prejudice. However, a society which possesses no unifying values cannot build the solidarity to succeed. We must be one – irrespective of race, gender, sexual orientation or creed and we must engage with fellow citizens as equals. We reject the current obsession with grievance and identity which divides our society into hostile and opposing camps. We favour strengthening the common bonds which unite us and, in so doing, re-enforcing communitarian impulses in public life.

It is mistaken to view every departure from ethnic, class or gender proportionality as prima facie evidence of discrimination. Some group differences merely reflect free choices and preferences in a open society. We hold that civilised toleration of such differences is necessary if we are to avoid descent into bitterness and conflict. We believe the shared ‘identity politics’ of both the far right and far left to be inherently divisive and self-defeating. For many years the liberal-left has abandoned the politics of solidarity for those of individual emancipation, without realising that putting differences above common bonds can harm mutuality.

We believe ‘fraternity vs division’ to be a key watershed question in all Western societies. Fraternity must prevail.

We regard kindness and mutuality as a political rather than a legal achievement which relies on free consent rather than legal obligation. Excessive individualism – of both the social and economic variety – has regrettably led some citizens to believe they don’t share a common fate with their neighbours. They do.

## TOLERANCE

We are concerned that our long-standing culture of tolerance has fallen from favour. There is now insufficient viewpoint diversity among the academic and cultural elites who presume to set our nation's course. A dangerous myth has emerged which holds that cultural questions are capable of rational arbitration which must, inevitably, lead to a single liberal-left view.

Citizens holding a traditional, patriotic or religious outlook are often bullied and marginalised, stifling the open debate upon which a free and democratic society depends. From government to the police, from universities to schools, the politicisation of Britain's institutions in the service of fashionable ideology is leading to a loss of faith in the pillars that uphold our society. We believe instead, that a free and democratic society must hear different opinions in politeness and respect in order to thrive. We pledge to uphold the values of freedom of thought and speech which lie at the heart of British democracy.

## CULTURAL RENEWAL

Globalisation and the labour mobility driven by the unfettered free market has made it harder for ordinary citizens to raise secure families in the stable communities upon which a healthy society depends. However, the liberal-left tends to blame culturally embedded problems solely on spending cuts instead of acknowledging that many of our problems stem from decades-long shifts in attitudes and values. Too often the narrow politics of individualism take precedence over the interests of the wider community, with some being quicker to demand rights than to assume responsibilities. Welfare and public services should be used responsibly. If not, the mutuality upon which they depend will be eroded.

A widespread values and virtues-led cultural renewal is needed, aimed at improving citizens' happiness, health and well-being. Government – along with civic society – must play its role. We are communitarians. We reject laissez-faire libertarianism as indifferent and ineffective.

There is such a thing as society and, as Jo Grimond rightly said, it is as necessary to the individual as water is to fish.

## OUR FUTURE

Social reconciliation is the essential task of democratic politics for the next generation. The collapse of the British people's faith in the two parties who have mismanaged our nation presents a rare and precious opportunity to reform British politics in the service of the national good.

The SDP aims to provide a political home to all social democrats who seek a stronger and more capable state along with greater individual responsibility, trust and social solidarity.

These are the new politics of Britain's 21st century radical centre – defining the limits of the market and the state and harnessing them both to rebuild Britain. In staking out this fair and sensible centre ground, we believe we speak for Britain's hidden majority.

The New Declaration is a call for participation based on a simple premise: if we want a social democratic programme there must be a Social Democratic Party.

*Join us.*



At a time when Europe's traditional social democratic parties are in retreat Britain's Social Democratic Party (SDP) issues its '*New Declaration*' – a powerful call for the communitarian, social democratic nation-state in a post-neoliberal world.

[www.sdp.org.uk](http://www.sdp.org.uk)

*The Social Democratic Party  
272 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4JR*



The Social Democratic Party