

Wiesbaden Declaration Of Basic Principles for a Liberal Civil Society

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Introduction

Liberalism began its historic course as a philosophy of freedom and as a movement to ensure the rights of individuals. The arbitrary rule of absolutism was contradictory to the idea of a free society. With the founding of the constitutional state, liberalism was able to overcome absolutism.

Liberalism was the first political movement to give priority to the individual, his or her dignity, human rights of freedom and equality, rather than to the absolute power of the crown. Step by step, libertarians brought to fruition the modern constitutional state with individual basic rights, the freedom to shape one's own personality, the protection of minorities, the division of powers, and state power which is subject to law.

As a movement of freedom, liberalism fought not only for equality under the law, but also, for equal opportunity in society. The free market economy and the principle of social responsibility opened up new possibilities for liberalism to address the issues of basic subsistence and deal with the conservative entrenchment of society.

Our liberal constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany has helped established more democratic stability, more prosperity, more social justice and constitutionality than has ever existed before in history. And yet, the idea of freedom runs the risk of gradually being taken for granted and not appreciated. Less participation in the democratic process, fewer chances for a life of self-fulfillment caused by fewer opportunities to find secure work, the imposition of collective bargaining systems, and patronizing bureaucracies are new threats which freedom now faces.

I. The FDP Accepts the Responsibility for the Past, Present, and Future

After 1945, the Liberal Party helped the idea of freedom breakthrough to once again regain recognition. The FDP was always the driving force behind reform decisions in favor of freedom. Only on account of the FDP was the idea of a free social market economy able to prevail against the resistance of the Social Democratic and parts of the Christian Democratic Parties in the 1950's. Only on account of the FDP could more civil liberty prevail against right-wing conservatism and the moral majority in the 1970's. The Liberal Party was pioneer in leading the way for the movement to liberalize and democratize society against the government's imposing dominance and narrow-mindedness. Finally, our policy of economical renewal in the 1980's helped bring more jobs and more prosperity to more citizens.

A major part of the resistance against a purely socialized system of government was due to the attractiveness which a free economy and liberal society offered. Now reunified and firmly embedded in a process of European integration, Germany enjoys more freedom than ever before in its history. For this reason, the challenges which are a result of reunification are of major concern to the Liberal Party.

Never before has our nation been more democratic, more enlightened, our level of prosperity higher. And yet, we cannot continue to do things the way we've done them before. Unemployment in Germany, which has gone into the millions, is a threat to freedom. That is why overcoming unemployment is the central question in determining whether our society will be productive and filled with solidarity in the future or not. Unemployment is a direct result of past neglect to adjust to changing conditions. Overcoming unemployment in the long run, therefore, means continually adapting to new and changing conditions. Most people sense, what experts have long known: our country is not prepared for future challenges. Germany has significantly lost reform power, competitiveness, and vision.

In Germany politics are being increasingly determined by the way interest groups react or what pleases people. Politics have turned into so-called politics of appeasement. The government has increasingly taken up the everyday risks that people face and declared itself accountable for solving each and every problem. The

public in general has, on its part, pushed the job of solving its own problems to government. Hence, the increasing demand on government corresponds directly with a decreasing demand on its citizens.

When it comes down to politics of appeasement, it isn't important whether a decision is good or bad, but rather, whether a decision pleases or not. As a result, politicians who practice such politics don't have the courage anymore to say unpopular things: our present prosperity, for example, is being continually financed with new and ever increasing credit -a burden on the future. A national debt of more than 2000 Billion Deutsche Marks is a scandal of ours caused by such politics of appeasement, which future generations shouldn't be expected to pay for. Our social welfare system and the benefits it provides is presently a formal agreement made to the disadvantage of future generations. It takes away a persons ability to secure his or her own future. Moreover, it can barely be financed today. More and more recipients and services have to be financed with fewer contributors, who are then forced to pay higher premiums. Respectively, an environmental policy, which in the end only consists of governmental requirements and restrictions, doesn't do justice to the protection of natural resources and isn't in interest of future generations.

The courage to initiate reform gets loss due to politics of appeasement. The status quo becomes sacred. Change is interpreted as threat and subsequently blocked by organized interest groups. Temporary assistance in times of structural change turns into long-term subvention. Taxes, fees, and over-regulation force jobs out of the country. Politics of appeasement and state bureaucracy with its fondness for subvention and a mentality of "full liability" lead to structural conservatism and a deficit of affordable labor -a situation which we are now experiencing. Moreover, long-term unemployment endangers future generation's chances of leading a self-fulfilled life. Incomprehensible social laws make it possible for just about everyone to receive just about any sort of hand-out. The various social laws anchored down in the Constitution are being misconstrued, as if politicians have a "free hand" to justify more and more new expenditures. Solidarity and human care are reduced to mere bureaucratic services. Responsibility becomes something governmental, instead of being instilled in the individual citizen.

Politics of appeasement don't insure against poverty, but rather, cater to the special needs of organized interest groups. Each and every professional group receives its own special concession. Each and every eventuality in life is met with a corresponding state assurance plan. The government has become a full-service agency for client interests -an underwriter for all private risks. Many people were only willing to believe in this illusion of "full care", which government and special interest groups created. They (the people) approved this "contest of promises" by casting their vote for those who made the most promises. Nonetheless, they are beginning to realize, that politics of appeasement which promise everyone everything cannot be paid for. They suspect: politics of appeasement cannot deliver what it promises. A bureaucratic government only leads to the patronage of its citizens. A government that taxes its citizens too high robs them of their achievements -of their opportunities. A government that advocates debt destroys their future.

Those who burden government with more responsibilities, accept higher taxes and debt to finance such responsibilities as a matter of consequence. Those who bemoan rising taxes shouldn't, however, at the same time call out for more social benefit programs. The inclination of politicians to solve each and every problem with a government program goes hand in hand with the inclination of most people to demand more and more from their government. The separation between freedom and responsibility -as many rights and as much freedom as possible for the citizen and as many obligations and responsibilities as possible on the part of the government- doesn't only lead to public bankruptcy, it also results in a loss of freedom and public commitment.

Politics of appeasement are also apparent in aspects of civil rights. Instead of dealing with the causes of illegal behavior or enforcing existing laws, regulations are increased and tightened symbolically. In every political party, social democratic conservatives and conservative social democrats are seeking political success by competing for the best way to continue the wrong political approach. Required is a political power, that calls things the way they are -regardless of public opinion- and openly campaigns for a path of principle: a way to an open, civil society

Such an open and civil society not only requires structural change in former East Germany, but also and above all, in West Germany. The past life experiences of the people in former East Germany, all of the changes they've experienced, are valuable lessons for us here in the west.

Making errors and the ability to correct wrong developments is part of an open, civil society in a pluralistic democracy. Political parties that maintain their infallible are undemocratic. Even the FDP has participated too often in politics of appeasement. And even the FDP has shown too little resistance. We in the Liberal Party acknowledge our responsibility for that what was. However, in acknowledging our responsibility for the past, we won't allow our right to be taken away to make future demands for a change of thinking which is now required.

We in the Liberal Party are countering the politics of appeasement with a society built on responsibility.

II. Four Basic Pillars of Modern Liberalism

Government cannot and should not regulate everything. It should only protect the basic rights of its citizens: civil society's "rule of thumb" for a future in freedom. Those areas which are threats to freedom are the areas where libertarians define their political ambitions.

1. Freedom means responsibility

Liberalism strives for the greatest possible freedom for the individual. An individual's freedom is only then limited, when it interferes with the freedom of others. Therefore, personal freedom and responsibility, taken for themselves, are inseparable. But, personal freedom also requires the willingness to bear responsibility for other fellow citizens -individually, freely with the cooperation of others, and by participating in voluntary activities in and out of politics.

The greater the freedom the greater the responsibility. Freedom is the ethical basis upon which a free society is based. The principle "Freedom through Responsibility" establishes a society, in which self-reliance and humanity help shape the foremost characteristics of a republican form of state. A liberal society not only requires, but, encourages an individual to take on responsibility. Freedom through responsibility replaces the rigid structures of state bureaucracy and powerful lobbying organizations. More personal and mutual responsibility means less government. Only when the burdens of personal and mutual responsibility become too great to bear do citizens ask their government to bear responsibility.

Liberalism advocates freedom by taking responsibility and not the liberty to be free from responsibility. Freedom is not the lack of consideration for others. Freedom is the responsibility for others.

As our social democratic century draws to an end, the illusion is widespread that an individual can have personal freedom without taking responsibility. Politicians have created a vision in which government can guarantee freedom and take responsibility in all walks of life, without individuals having to take any responsibility. Responsibility

has become something strictly governmental. Solidarity has been reduced to a governmental service. The separation of freedom from responsibility creates a situation where citizens become customers and the government is the retailer. The characterization of responsibility as a governmental task costs more and more personal freedom and mutual sharing.

Moreover, an increase in governmental services means an increase in government spending. Government interference with personal initiative and decision making is ever increasing. The intention to replace personal responsibility with government service organizations for all risks in life leads to an overburdening of government. This in turn creates a government which cannot be paid for and prevents the much more effective form of self-reliance from being realized. At the same time, the government is less able to fulfil its main responsibilities.

The Liberal Party advocates more rights for more people, knowing full well, that they are demanding more willingness for people to take responsibility. Liberalism trusts in the willingness and the ability of people to decide and act for themselves and to take full responsibility for their actions. Of course, there are times when a person needs help. But, help to help oneself interferes the least with personal freedom and responsibility and is therefore the most human and dignified form of assistance. The Liberal Party trusts in responsible citizens and not in a patronizing government. The Liberal Party demands more from its fellow citizens, because it trust them to do more.

2. Freedom means variety

Liberalism calls for civility through variety. Freedom means variety. Variety in a free market economy means more competition. Variety in society calls for more tolerance. The dynamics of freedom unfold as much in the social realm of ideas, plans, and solutions; as in its commercial counterpart of interests and products.

Social and economic freedom are inseparable. Social freedom and economic freedom are both prerequisites for one another and promote each other. Just as a free market economy requires a liberal, variable, and tolerant society; so does a liberal, variable, and tolerant society require a free market economy.

The Liberal Party advocates an economy free from governmental regulation, with the best social and environmental results -instead of an economy regulated by government with the best social and environmental intentions. Only a truly free market economy can provide a high level of social welfare and security. Only in a market of ideas and active problem-solving can we preserve our environment: the basis of all living things.

A free and open society is only possible with a free market and free competition. The Liberal Party wants business and competition in society, just as well as a society of opinions, competing ideas, and diversifying lifestyles. Then freedom means variety.

The FDP -as party of organized liberalism- distinguishes itself from all other political parties, which propagate progress through their belief in state government and state intervention, through its advocacy of reason, diversity, and competition. Personal freedom releases creativity and the willingness to perform. Progress thrives best in a free, open, and plural society. The Liberal Party works to disqualify the notion, that the support for economical freedom is right-winged political conservatism and societal freedom left-winged liberalism. The Liberal Party draws its political distinction not between right and left, but, between freedom and subjugation.

Competition thrives on a person's eagerness to achieve with equal rules and fair play. Only when a person's achievement is beneficial to everyone, can equal opportunities be created and society socially developed. Freedom is inconceivable without personal incentive. The Liberal Party wants to set more personal incentive free and enable more people to achieve. Barriers that constrain incentive and stifle personal achievement have to be removed from community, business, and government.

Discrimination of minorities and the alienation of foreigners is incompatible with the idea of a free and open civil society. Intolerance leads to the violation of basic human rights and does away with variety.

3. Freedom means Progress

The biggest risk today lies not in changing the status quo, but, not changing it. Without the willingness to change, there is no future. Change means taking risks. Those who try to avoid all risks in life also avoid all chances. This is our greatest danger. The Liberal Party welcomes progress through reason. A society that doesn't endeavor, loses its ability to correct itself and to go new ways.

Rather than fearing the future, the Liberal Party believes that change can open up new possibilities. Rather than reminiscing about the past and denying the future, the FDP prefers the promise of progress. Rather than longing for a simple, undemanding society in a increasingly complex world, the Liberal Party trusts in a variety of prospects and new lifestyles that complexity brings. Then freedom means progress.

Everything changes except the belief that we can stay the way we are. The dynamics of freedom can only be unleashed with the willingness to change. Only the dynamics of freedom in all areas of the community, business, and government offer a chance for progress. Change shouldn't be for change's sake. Only through a process of reason and evaluation does change become progress.

Never before has there been so much change. Far-reaching changes can already be seen in all walks of life: education, career, family, government, and community. As the main attribute of change, globalization allows education and employment to become international, thus leaving national borders behind. Setting up protectionist measures in all areas of life will be impossible -nationally and on a European level.

The dynamics of freedom, which are required for the growth and development of our society, are being threatened by a form of conservatism, that holds conformity for the first responsibility of citizens. The same dynamics are being equally threatened by a system of government, which monopolizes all initiative for change for itself. And yet, the initiative for societal change has to be turned over to the individual, the citizen. The Liberal Party counters the dictatorial principle that "All that is not allowed is disallowed", with the constitutional principle that "All that is not disallowed is allowed".

4. Freedom means Compatibility with the Future

Freedom also includes the freedom of each and every generation to make its own decisions. And still, each generation is responsible to preserve the next generations chances of freedom, and not to risk these chances through high expenditures and/or consumption. Therefore, all political decisions should be required to be measured in terms of the impact they have on the future. Then freedom means compatibility with the future.

Today's generation is living at the expense of tomorrow's. The politics of appeasement do not take into consideration those born after us. A liberal and responsible society, however, protects the next generation's freedom; not only in terms of conserving natural resources, but, also in terms of government spending and stipulations made to the disadvantage of future generations. A generation's responsibility in terms of its freedom grows to that extent in which its decisions affect the freedom of the next generation. The protection of future generations must therefore be firmly anchored in the Constitution.

III. The Liberal Civil Society in a Free Democratic State.

It isn't the government that allows its people their freedom, but rather, the people who allow the government to limit their freedom.

Freedom through Participation, Participation through Freedom

Participation means responsibility. Mandatory collective bargaining systems limit participation and responsibility, governmental bureaucracy suppresses them.

In a liberal civil society, the individual citizen decides what's appropriate for him or herself using his or her own initiative. The liberal civil society is a society based on participation, because it doesn't consist of obligatory communities. Instead, its citizens organize themselves freely using their own initiative. The liberal government is a government made up of individual citizens, because they are the ones who transfer certain rights to it and organize it democratically. The liberal economy is an economy of citizen participation. A free market economy provides the best chances for such participation. Those who cannot participate are not truly free. And yet, participation requires personal freedom.

Citizens as Participants in Society: The Liberal Civil Society

The Liberal Party counters a society of bureaucrats with a society of citizens: the liberal civil society. Neither a society with patronizing governmental services nor a society with bureaucrats is compatible with a liberal civil society. Our idea of society is a society of individual citizen participation.

1. Rediscovering Personal Decision Making in a Liberal Civil Society

Every citizen has the right to determine his or her own goals in life, to pursue happiness, and to seek opportunity, so that he or she may develop his or her own preferences and talents -alone or in freely chosen groups. Every citizen also has the right to look for his or her own answer to the question of the meaning of life -whether

in church or any other religious or philosophical community. The basis for an open and civil society is the freedom of thought, belief, and religion.

The Liberal Party wants the freedom to decide to be more than just a phrase. It has to do with the idea of a real and attainable individual freedom; a freedom to decide as a person sees fit, responsible for his or her own happiness, the measure of all political decisions. The greater an individual's freedom; the greater is his or her own responsibility for society. With the task of finding values and acting responsibly, the Liberal Party entrusts in the individual to do so.

Freeing society from the straightjacket of rules and regulations is the only hope to return freedom to the people. The variety of personal decisions and their widespread differences are not only accepted, but, wanted. Only through different approaches to problem solving does imagination and creativity develop. Two things that - considering our complex world- are needed for survival.

The discrimination of women must be done away with. A civil society has to provide equal chances for both men and women. In addition to this, a civil society must offer more opportunities to families. Domestic work and child care deserves the same recognition in society as work done for an employer. The FDP supports all measures that make it easier for both men and women alike to combine career and family meaningfully. An equal representation of both men and women in all areas of society is a cause well worth reaching for.

The Liberal Party relies on voluntary commitment, sacrifices, and mutual sharing first, out of a responsibility for others, instead of relying on government hand-outs. Only those individuals who determine the course of their lives themselves can consciously and freely commit themselves to helping others. The necessary reduction of government intervention and regulation has to be countered with a solidarity for those who really need help and support. Solidarity with society's less fortunate is one of the demands that liberalism makes on its followers. Then practicing freedom is also a chance to experience freedom.

Making such chances reality is not only the job of government, but rather, each citizen. This type of solidarity can be shown by everyone in everyday life. It is our job to give back to the people the possibility to act socially and by doing so, help them regain a new sense of purpose in their lives.

2. Given Doubt: Public Initiative

That which an individual can decide for himself or herself, should also be decided by him or her. In a liberal civil society, it is not the responsibility of government to “deprive” people of their problems: citizens deal with their problems freely and responsibly themselves. Where citizens need governmental decisions, such decisions have to be made as close as possible in accordance with their needs. That means at the community level first, and then on a state, national, and finally supranational (European) level. The next higher level of government should only be allowed to regulate that which the lower level of government cannot regulate better itself. For the Liberal Party, subsidence, therefore, means preference for subordinate social structures.

A free community lives from the idea that its citizens are prepared to freely take on responsibility for others. The voluntary acceptance of responsibility and an individual’s personal commitment are obligatory and far better than a patronizing welfare state. For the Liberal Party, the individual citizen comes before government.

3. Given Doubt: Self-Organization and Cooperation

Freedom does not mean isolation from society, selfishness, and lack of commitment. The Liberal Party supports the idea, that commitments are made freely and individually.

Marriage and Family are the basic foundations of a civil society. Families require special support in order to correct past discrimination. Therefore, government aid to families is not social charity, but, an investment in our society’s future. Today, in addition to the traditional form of marriage, there are other forms of partnership being forged -all new forms of responsibility. The Liberal Party considers these situations,

in which two individuals accept responsibility for one another, valuable. Relationships based on responsibility should not be discriminated against. Accordingly, legal discrimination against the formation of such partnerships or such living arrangements must be done away with. In addition to this and more than ever, all those children who are part of such relationships have to be sheltered and encouraged. Today's treatment of children determines the character of tomorrow's society.

When in doubt, the Liberal Party advocates that individuals organize themselves according to their own free will. Associations, foundations, self-help organizations, and all other forms of voluntary cooperation should be given preference as opposed to government, when it comes to dealing with community matters. Private initiatives, for example in day care or care of the elderly, have to be freed from bureaucracy and widely deregulated.

4. Given Doubt: Community First

Libertarians decide for the community, when individual ability and the cooperation of others falls short. Only in the community are citizens closest to community problems and the government closest to them.

Only communities can find the best solutions to local problems. Only the citizen can engage himself or herself most effectively for the needs of the community in the community. It's citizens that participate in political decisions on a local level from public referendums to public decrees. It's this form of government at the community level that results in more genuine democracy and more citizen participation. Involvement in honorary activities deserves more public recognition.

The Liberal Party relies on variety and competition among regionally responsible communities, rather than standardizing community living conditions. It is only when communities offer variety, that individuals have the possibility to choose their life's direction in accordance with their own aspirations. Self-government at the community level means more free room for community decisions. Therefore, more independence for communities is required.

A reform of existing financial legislation is desperately needed in order to promote financial structures that agree with the financial functions they serve. Both federal and state governments have to balance out supplemental expenditures which arise when mandates and services are transferred to communities. This also leads to the required self-limitation of state and local government, to a reduction of unnecessary governmental services, as well as a reduction of bureaucracy.

The democratic principle of “by the people for the people” has to be followed by the principle of finance “pay your own way”. Therefore, communities should have the right to levy the majority of taxes for the services they provide.

5. The Open Civil Society

An open civil society lives from the cooperation of all independent of their heritage or ethnic origin. A society that isolates people according their ethnic backgrounds contradicts the principles of an open society. The rights and obligations of participation are not limited to an individual’s nationality in a civil society. For this reason, the right to vote in local elections should not be dependent on citizenship, but, on a person’s membership in the local community. Foreigners should have the right to vote and run for office in their community after legally residing in Germany for five years.

Our society is becoming increasingly European and at the same time international. The Liberal Party advocates a society that is open for immigration and cultural influences from abroad, so long as such a society is able to determine its own degree of openness and to subject itself to self-regulation. Those individuals who come into our country as immigrants have the right to know what awaits them here -before being possibly naturalized as citizens.

More than 7 million foreigners are currently living in Germany. These foreigners are of different heritage and ethnic origin. How German’s and Non-German’s treat each other, under what type of conditions foreigners live in Germany, what type of legal status they have, and how German’s and immigrants act towards one another is vital for the preservation of domestic peace and tolerance in our society. Germany has

and needs immigration. Our goal has to be to integrate these and other immigrants, which means achieving that Germans and immigrants live together equally. The liberal civil society invites people to be included. It asks of them the willingness to be integrated, yet, doesn't force them to give up their identity. The Liberal Party stands for a variety of lifestyles, for an exchange of ideas, for the cooperation of different cultures and religions in our land, for the possibility of self-realization within a common framework of set goals and values.

A policy of systematical immigration and naturalization requires a legal basis. For this reason, we require legislation to control immigration. A legal foundation generates acceptance and agreement in society -for both the immigrant and the society that takes him or her in. Our existing legislation pertaining to citizenship doesn't do justice to our society, which, as stated above, is becoming increasingly international. Foreigners, whose lives are here in Germany, must be given a chance to obtain German citizenship easier. The successful integration of immigrants requires the willingness to integrate, the removal of obstacles that discriminate and help by the process of integration. Second-generation immigrant children, who are born in Germany, should receive German citizenship with birth. In addition to this, an unlimited residence permit and an offer of naturalization should be given to those individuals who have legally resided here for five years. At the end of a second three-year-period an individual should have a legal right to be naturalized.

Citizens are Stakeholders in the Economy: The Free Social Market Economy

A free social market economy combines the interests of the individual with the interests of all. The free social market economy is an economic order, in which the willingness to perform and the basis of social justice can best be achieved. The social efficiency of a country follows its economical efficiency.

The Liberal Party counters a bureaucratic planned economy with a free social market economy. Because of bureaucratic entrenchment in government and organizations, as well as the globalization of the economy, the free social market economy requires renewal. Only with more competition, more innovation, and more flexibility can we raise productivity and create more jobs.

6. Workers as Co-Owners

Work is a crucial part of our lives and our identity. Those who understand a worker's participation as only being a part of the decision-making process with trade unions, don't do justice to the future. Workers should be co-owners. The right to private ownership, which are free market economy guarantees, is, realistically speaking, in many areas almost non-existent. Particularly in areas where workers take part in companies by means of asset contribution, future chances are being squandered.

The huge difference between gross and net income prevents individuals from acquiring property and privately financing their retirement. Too little equity capital endangers companies, and nationwide collective wage agreements take away companies' ability to negotiate wage agreements that are in accordance with their own pay structures.

In contrast, asset contribution can create new bonds between companies and employees. Such contributions overcome the separation of responsibilities between workers and owners, makes co-owners out of workers, profit-earners out of wage-earners. As contributors to a company's assets, workers then have more possibilities to influence their companies. Asset contribution creates more motivated workers and more independence on the job, which is directly tied to the success of the company. It also supports private retirement and directs more capital into companies, which can then secure or create new jobs.

A prerequisite for asset contribution is voluntary company agreement and free choice of investment forms. Legislation making asset contribution compulsory or compulsory asset contribution created by trade unions doesn't take into consideration the varying structures that individual companies have and is, therefore, unjust. Subsequently, trade union agreements should include separate clauses that enable profit sharing as replacement for certain parts of union wages. Regardless of which type of payment form - stock option, cash or investment fund- the individual agreement should be decided upon between management and workforce.

The transfer of company stock options to workers, either by bequest or as gift, should be completely tax-free. The estate tax should be waived, if company ownership or a part thereof is transferred to its workforce, since such “public ownership” is the private alternative to an estate-tax .

The government must allow more free room for co-ownership between workers and owners. High taxes and fees eat up an individual’s chances for private asset growth. Especially in light of the diminishing ability of social security to provide for a secure retirement, private asset growth is more important than ever. That’s why a net-reduction of taxes and fees is a requirement for a broader distribution and building of private assets.

A wide range of existing and successful forms of collective-ownership point the way to a liberal business community full of participants. In the interest of more responsibility, in the interest of more profitable companies, and more secure jobs, both unions and government must clear the way for more worker participation in business.

Instead of more state property, the Liberal Party wants more private property. The chance to “privately own more” is an incentive to perform, creates true social security, and encourages the willingness to take responsibility. Increased private ownership is the prerequisite for a society that takes new risks and seeks new independence. Neither socialism or unbridled capitalism is compatible with the Liberal Party’s economic model. The Liberal Party’s economy is an economy, where all individuals are participants.

7. The Information Society and Its Citizens

The information society is changing the way in which we live, learn, and work. The traditional industrial society was characterized by centralization, rigid structures, and hierarchies. The information society, however, demands creativity, decentralization, participation, flexible structures, and personal responsibility. To that extent, the information society corresponds to liberal ideals, and despite everything, it challenges its citizens to take liberal steps in forming a liberal society.

The information society and the new technology which accompanies it offers new chances, but, also harbors new dangers. It can, for example, connect people with one another, but, also separate and isolate them. Multimedia can inform, but, also manipulate. On the one hand, there is the danger that the new mobility will force jobs to move away. On the other hand, work becomes more flexible and new employment possibilities arise.

Every day, more and more people become members of our global community by connecting to networks and using multimedia. And yet, we have many people who are afraid of the changes that lay ahead. It is not the development of new technology which presents the greatest risks, but, the lack thereof. Those who oppose progress take such fears and exploit them, in order that they may turn back the wheel of progress and build new walls against the changes that the information society brings. Selfish interest groups defend their status quo against the “threatening” transparency, which the information society brings. The information advantage that functionaries have is endangered by the free and unlimited availability of information. At the same time, conservatives of every political color are spreading new theories about the alienation that tomorrow’s information society will bring.

The Liberal Party sees chances for individuals to create their own lives in the information society first. We also trust in the ability of individuals to make use of the possibilities and means that await them in the information society –responsibly and by making their own decisions. It is not the use of modern technology that’s the risk, but, barriers that prohibit access to such technology; the consequence being a divided society consisting of the informed and the uninformed.

A marketplace of unlimited possibilities to exchange knowledge, services, and opinions without barriers of time and space opens up new perspectives for individuals to look at work and recreation. At the same time, the state’s monopoly on control declines, because the information society knows no national borders. Personal and economic actions become characterized by more personal responsibility and self-control.

The access to information, networks and other forms of communication technology must be widespread. The Liberal Party wants variety through the competition which a free market brings –even in the information society. A variety of programs and opinions in the media is only attainable through more competition free from state monopolies, big business, and obscure relationships between parent companies and their subsidies. The Liberal Party advocates multimedia and not a multitude of media czars.

The unlimited access to information must, however, be restricted with regard to personal information. Therefore, legislation has to provide for the protection of personal information, copyrights, intellectual property, and the free access to information. Where as in the past, the government's foremost priority was the protection of citizen's private lives, the information society presents new challenges: more and more personal information is now available to non-government organizations and businesses, as well as private individuals. The Liberal Party opposes the idea of using information storage and retrieval systems to research an individual's private life. This applies to private individuals, as well as government accessing personal information.

For a high-wage country such as Germany, highly qualified jobs in the information industry are a future chance for more high-paying jobs. The sooner new technology is introduced, the sooner new jobs will be created.

So-called tele-working and residential call centers decrease or eliminate completely the distance between home and office. Working by phone reduces traffic, thus diminishing the impact that traffic has on the environment. At the same time, such jobs allow for more flexible working conditions. The result is that both help improve the situation of combining career and family –a benefit for single mothers and fathers as well. But, even the physically handicapped are given new possibilities of employment.

The use of new technology touches all areas of business. The future of employment in the industrial sector is being just as well determined by new technology, as the service sector.

Today, the processing of huge amounts of essential information fast is characteristic for the new quality of human accomplishment. Yet, processing information for its own sake isn't an end in itself, but, only a means to an end.

Accordingly, the information society won't only be characterized by information processing and communication, but rather, it will be shaped by its citizens

8. Scientific Research with Freedom and Responsibility.

Technical knowledge and its application was and remains the starting point for industrialization worldwide. Additionally, technology will be the starting point for long-term development in an ecologically based market economy. The Liberal Party opposes hostilities towards technology. Instead, the Liberal Party trusts in the use of modern technology and the chances that technological progress bring. The responsibility for future generations requires independent research and development, as well as the application of new technology. Such requirements are absolutely essential for securing Germany's scientific and business communities.

Liberal politic advocates the constitutionally guaranteed right of freedom of science and research. Liberal politic also supports basic research on a broad basis. The limits of scientific research and technology are set by human dignity.

Our political and administrative framework has to be conceived in such a way, that the results from scientific research can be quickly turned into commercial products and business-related procedures. Providing more opportunities for the application and usage of research results is more important than government subsidies for research and development.

New developments that show signs of consumer demand and are put into practice in our own country open up and improve our export chances.

Concerns for the environment do not mean the Liberal Party's refuses new technology and a corresponding infrastructure. A modern infrastructure in

transportation, energy, and telecommunication can help improve the environment on a whole. Early and continued application of new technology encourages less consumption of natural resources, creates future jobs, and paves the way for long-term economic development. It's not the development of new technology which presents the greatest risks, but, the lack thereof.

Only a solid foundation of future-oriented technical development can help future generations secure their economical existence in our land.

Citizens are Equal State Participants: The Democratic Civil State

Neither an authoritarian government, nor a democracy of passive observers corresponds with the Liberal Party's idea of state and society. The liberal state is a state characterized by citizen participation. A state where its citizens don't participate is not a liberal.

9. The Democratic Civil State

Democracy lives from the participation of citizens in the activities of society and government. It is dangerous when citizens no longer see the need to participate in democratic processes.

The relationship between government and citizen is a main interest for the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party wants to strengthen personal freedom, chances, and initiative of the individual citizen against the power of government. The Liberal Party wants less government and less bureaucracy through decentralization, privatization, and a reduction of red tape. The Liberal Party wants to curtail the growing power of political parties, organization, and associations, so that the interests of citizens, who aren't formally organized, can be heard. Government should not be allowed to turn into an instrument for powerful lobbies. Therefore the question that should be asked is not only "How do we protect citizens from government?", but also, "How do we protect government from powerful interests groups?".

Political parties have reached a position of power in government and society, that far exceeds that which the Constitution prescribes. According to the Constitution, political parties are supposed to work together with citizens in the political decision making process and not replace them. Political parties should be intermediaries between society and government. Their role is to serve and not to rule. And yet, party participation has instead taken over government.

The FDP intends to cut back party power in favor of more power for the individual citizen. Only then will government be a representation of people and not a representation of parties.

Less party politics means less government and more personal freedom. Less government means less party politics and more personal freedom. By reducing government, the influence of political parties is reduced thereby resulting in numerous interest groups losing their ability to manipulate government. Less party politics therefore means less lobbying.

Our communities have republican foundations which require the activation of their citizens. Active citizens want more rights to participate. The question as to the value of direct citizen participation is different today from what it was during the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany. The precautionary measures, which were taken out of fear for repeating the mistakes of the Weimar Republic, can be reduced. Such an easing process is required in order to necessitate the growing desire of citizens to participate in the decision-making process in an ever increasing individual society. Our individual society must correspond with a government which is close to its citizenry.

The Liberal Party wants to strengthen citizen participation with two objectives in mind: first, more political participation for citizens and second, more responsibility in an active civil society. We want more democracy and more transparency by the nomination of political candidates and an improvement by the selection of political candidates. The possibility for voters to determine ballots must be increased. As far as the legal framework for elections is concerned, so-called vote accumulation

(accumulating votes for an electoral purpose) and split votes (voting for candidates of different parties) should be introduced for all levels of elections.

Above all, citizens should be able to participate more in decisions that affect their communities. This includes the direct election of mayor and state parliament officials in all states. Public referendums, initiatives, and polls should be established at state and community levels. The FDP advocates public referendums at a federal level, so that citizens have more influence over important issues in parliament.

For the FDP, more citizen participation also means more participation from members and voters in political parties. The Liberal Party wants to begin with a complete renewal of the party apparatus and committee structure, their ways of communicating, and the services they offer so that politics in Germany can finally be a thing of the people. Out of centralization, we want to generate decentralization and more concentration for the needs of individuals. We want to strengthen the rights of members and delegates; modernize structures. We want to shape ourselves up for efficient political decision making and free ourselves from confining political dogma, so that we can get on with the political work that really matters; and open ourselves up for more citizen participation.

10. The Liberal Constitutional State

All people are different. With regard to their dignity and under the law, however, all people are equal. In this sense, it doesn't only depend on formal, legal equality, but, the opportunity to equally participate in society. In order to protect the freedom of choice to choose different lifestyles, the law requires impartial and just courts. To guarantee freedom means to protect minorities. Only when laws are made and enforced independent of race, religion, or creed, is it possible to preserve equal opportunity. This idea is expressed in the constitutional state.

The government isn't the citizens guardian, but instead, their tool for protecting an open and civil society. For this reason, it isn't the government which allows citizens their freedom, but, the citizens who allow the government to limit their freedom to guarantee equal rights. In the same sense, government requires continual

legitimization from its citizens for the continuance and expansion of its activities, which are all marked by bureaucracy. For this reason, basic civil rights -as manifestation of constitutional thought- are rights of the individual citizen to defend himself or herself against government, as well as the right of minorities to defend themselves against the majority.

Democratically legitimized state control over the law and law enforcement is representative for the constitutional state. It guarantees the demand that an open and civil society makes for a peaceful coexistence. Crime is a violation against humanity. An open and civil society is characterized by freedom with security and freedom through security. The price for securing freedom is too high, when law and order has to be kept for its own sake. Therefore, in the end, law and order has to be measured not on efficiency, but rather, constitutionality.

The constitutional state is endangered when laws aren't enforced. Such deficits undermine a person's respect and awareness for the law. For this reason, we mustn't only enforce the law, we must be able to enforce it.

11. The Liberal State and Social Issues

Each and every person has the right to a life in dignity. Freedom requires a material basis. The Liberal Party is conscious of the fact that even with increasing citizen awareness and increasing responsibility for one another, state social welfare has to be provided to secure basic subsistence. At the moment, the majority of people are insured through mandatory social insurance, followed by state/tax-financed Social Security.

The benefits of Social security are currently wage-based. In this sense, Social Security is exceedingly dependent on employment and pay developments. Moreover, due to disturbances in the employment sector and other demographic developments, even pension plans have to change the benefits they provide to match the given situation. In the future, social security won't be able to provide complete coverage for an individual's living standard. Instead, personally responsible forms of supplemental insurance are needed. Those individuals who can't pay for such supplemental

insurance themselves can still be provided with state-financed Social Security/social welfare to secure basic subsistence.

The liberal social state concentrates its help on those who only really need it. The social democratic state, however, gives a little help to everyone.

As previously stated, employment is crucial for leading a dignified life. Today, more freedom for more people means more jobs for more people. Liberal politics' credo is not handing something out to everyone, but rather, including those who are left out. Creating jobs, therefore, is the most important social responsibility. Employment is the essential basis for personal sustenance and capital growth. Long-term unemployment, just like insufficient environmental measures, jeopardizes future generation's chances in life, as well as social peace today.

The Liberal Party's idea of creating a system of earned income tax credit plays an essential role in overcoming high unemployment in the minimum wage sector and for providing a more transparent social welfare system. The earned income tax credit system links tax-financed social welfare benefits to income taxes to form a simple, complete social concept. Whereas today, a total of 153 social benefits based on varying criteria are granted by 37 different government departments, the earned income tax credit system allows the state revenue service to adjust income taxes with tax-financed social benefits in a clear and sensible way. Therefore, only one government department –the state revenue service- is responsible for determining the earned income tax credit (negative tax) and, in the case of the underprivileged, allocating a tax credit (tax reduction) or levying taxes for those individuals who aren't eligible for the tax credit.

As an incentive to accept regular employment, only a part of an individual's pay would be used as a basis for calculating the earned income tax credit. In this sense, even employment in the minimum wage sector becomes profitable - where wages measured on output wouldn't otherwise cover basic living expenses.

As we enter into the information and service society there are new opportunities for more employment. However, it is becoming increasingly important in the minimum

wage sector to close the gap between wages which can be paid for by companies without endangering jobs and adequate wages that are required to lead a self-sufficient and responsible life. Not closing such a gap through a system of earned income tax credit means that the entire social system will be shocked by rising unemployment in the minimum wage sector.

Helping people return back into the working world should be the goal –whenever possible- of society built on solidarity. Providing long-term support isn't the "goal". Instead, we should enable people to become self-sufficient through their own work.

The current benefit system doesn't do justice to the requirements of fairness, efficiency, and encouraging performance. It caters to the needs of influential interest groups, while leaving less and less for the really disadvantaged. The realization of the "perfect social system" with its all-embracing red tape, created mostly with good intention in mind to provide (social) justice to as many individuals as possible, has created new injustices because of increasing bureaucracy.

Because of more transparency and opportunities to create a personally responsible life, a reformed social system leads to more social justice, insures a financially dignified existence, creates more incentives to find employment, reduces bureaucracy, and necessitates the required efficiency when providing social benefits. The earned income tax credit is, for this reason, the very heart of a liberal social state.

The special quality of a liberal social state can be seen by how handicapped people are treated. These people should be integrated as much as possible in society – especially in kindergartens, schools, and other areas for career development. The integration has to be coupled with support, which gives them the chance to develop their own talents, so that they can equally participate in the community, and which puts them in a position where they can make their own special contribution to an open civil society.

12. The Liberal State and Culture

Culture has a special meaning for the Liberal Party, because a society's cultural basis is also the basis for communication. Culture requires taking care of to keep it alive and financial support for its further development. Cultural work also receives additional political attention, due to the fact that in a modern democracy as our own, traditional values are less and less binding for individual citizens. Therefore, liberal culture politics' aim is to create an intellectual atmosphere, in which the individual citizen finds cultural diversity an advantage that he or she can use productively.

"Arts and sciences, research and teaching are free" (5th Article of the German Constitution). According to the Liberal Party's platform, insuring these rights also means that government has a responsibility to ensure that its citizens have access to cultural facilities. Museums, libraries, universities, academies, and other educational facilities, but also, cultural events, exhibits, and performances should be more than just places of learning or for entertainment purposes: they should help people to orient their lives in a complex and ever changing world. The ban on censorship anchored down in the Constitution is also considered by the Liberal Party to include a ban on government interference, patronage, and/or discrimination. Openness and tolerance should, instead, take the place of conformity and regimentation.

The arts are the center of cultural development and renewal. Since the beginning of time, art has made contemporary movements understandable by giving them form, and in this sense, making them civilly discussible and politically decidable. We also count on the politically vital, creative dynamics of art, because we see that it has an ability to communicate with all parts of society –in particular when certain cases might be highly controversial. Art represents the human element of culture, so that civilization isn't reduced to technocracy and organizational perfection. To Support the arts also means to politically invest in a plural society's ability to resolve differences.

Therefore, Liberal Politic encourages private culture funds and independent trusts. The acknowledgement of tax-free deductions for estate gifts and endowments to non-profit initiatives would be a creative boost for the arts. In addition to this, new laws concerning cultural foundations should link cultural freedom with cultural support and preserve both.

The Liberal Party knows that the question as to what art is, has always been controversial (mostly among the artist themselves). But, we also know that such controversies are part of the best traditions of our society. We want to give the various creative powers room to flourish, because it coincides with our liberal ideas, that only then can the best human ideas be discovered and developed.

13. Participation through Education and Training

The liberal civil society requires education and training as an elementary necessity for freedom, tolerance, and the ability to perform. Education is the ethical framework upon which a civil society is built. Education and training should teach us independence and self-confidence; encourage our willingness to take responsibility for ourselves and others. Education is a must for a stable democracy. The ability to adjust in a complex world, social virtues, knowledge, and skills are the basis upon which individuals responsibly shape their lives. The basic human right to education gives everyone an equal chance to receive education and training. But, being given equal chances in the beginning doesn't necessarily mean having equal results in the end.

Freedom calls for education. For this very reason, the Liberal Party has left its mark on the basic human right to education. Education and training -just as well as good upbringing- begin in the family. In order to provide equal opportunity at the start, we need more public education. Our schools should impart knowledge, encourage creativity, and build personality. Education facilities should also prepare students for the demands that the information society will make upon them. This includes teaching media competency and the ability to deal with information selectively. Those who don't learn to deal with this new technology from an early age on, can end up losing in the information society. The quality of education and training are going to gain even more relevance for success in the job market in the future.

Openness and competition of ideas and performance require a variety of educational offers: from pre-school to higher academic levels and occupational training. The public educational system needs free itself from entrenchment and regulation. This starts with more competition among the schools themselves, as well as through more

private educational facilities. Schools and universities should be given more freedom with regard to decision-making, financial authority, personnel, and curriculum.

At current, a huge part of the nations budget goes to financing education. At the same time, our educational system isn't able to meet future standards in international competition in education, training, science, and research. What we need is a political offensive for education.

Even in the future, the majority of school graduates will receive their occupational training by way of the vocational school system. This system has to be made more attractive and act as a credible alternative to an academic career. Training and additional education open up new perspectives for success in the job market. What's mandatory is that we create more flexibility and further develop professional qualifications in all areas. Specific programs –vocational and in general- have to be given increased support for those who are gifted, as well as those who are disabled due to learning disorders.

The German system of limiting access to jobs and promotions by means of formal examinations, degrees, et cetera contradicts the idea of an open civil society. In the civil service sector, but also in the private sector, a new course has to be taken towards more transparency by job entry and job promotion.

Education and training are a decisive for Germany's future. Investing in the minds of people is a huge chance –socially, culturally, and economically. That's why the Liberal Party stresses the importance of education and is going to make education a central part of its political platform.

Citizens are Participants in a Global Society

14. An Europe of Free Citizens

The Liberal Party's foreign policy gives priority to European integration. The idea of European integration was the historical answer to the catastrophes of two world wars. At the same time, it's a decisive step to a civil society with global responsibility.

Our goal is an united Europe of liberal civil societies, which take responsibility together for peace and freedom.

The liberal civil society thinks cosmopolitan and acts European being rooted in national and regional identity. Our common European culture is a solid foundation for an united Europe. Cultural differences preserve Europe's variety. We want unity through variety, because variety is freedom.

The European Union expands the idea of common values, which is inherent to all civil societies, beyond its borders. Europe unifies the strengths that the European civil societies have. Further European integration is the decisive step to a civil society with global responsibility.

We want a Europe of European citizens. For this purpose, we need to have more democracy in the European Union –an European constitution with a “bill of rights” and basic powers of government, an European parliament elected by common electoral laws and complete with rights and responsibilities, an Union with democratic decisions and institutions that are close to its citizens.

The European Union can only meet the challenges of globalization, if it moves forward with integration. Now that the “wall” has fallen, Europe faces its second greatest challenge: to overcome the separation which divides our continent. The new central and eastern European democracies belong to Europe. For this reason, the European Union must further its expansion consequently and at the same time strengthen its structures.

A stable and common European currency is required, so that both the German and European economies can become internationally competitive. The currency union completes the process of having a single European market and unleashes growth for more new jobs. After four decades of shared European growth, the time has come for a reliable and common European currency, which is organized by an independent treasury bank.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is the essence of the shared ideas and values which bind Europe and North America. As a system of collective defense, the NATO is an anchor for peace and security in Europe. In cooperation with other collective defense organizations (UNO, OSZE), the NATO serves humanity by helping to keep and establish peace, as well as implementing international law.

The European Union has to be further developed into an widespread political union. It should, therefore, not only emphasize its principle of solidarity in economical and social areas, but, moreover in areas of domestic and foreign security –areas considered vital by the majority of the population. For this reason, a common foreign and security politic (GASP: Gemeinsam Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik) is also required by the European Union, and the Western European Union (WEU) should be made an integral part of the European Union as quickly as possible. The Organization for Security in Central Europe (OSZE: Organisation für Sicherheit Zentraleuropa) is the most comprehensive framework for security and cooperation in this “new” Europe. The OSZE comprises all European countries including Russia.

Today, the biggest danger facing the civil society is a renewal of nationalism. What begins as protectionist measures for foreign products, ends with a free hand for domestic intolerance. Nationalism threatens peace, freedom, and human rights, but also, impairs the free exchange of knowledge, capital and labor. The Liberal Party strives for the enlightened civil society, that, on the verge to the 21st century, draws its legitimacy and executive power from the will for far-reaching international and European cooperation.

15. Civil Society’s Global Responsibility

The citizens in a liberal civil society are national and world citizens. They have a global responsibility for freedom and human dignity. They show consideration for other people independent of color, race, religion, or sex.

All people are free and born with inalienable rights and human dignity. These human rights are universal. Different traditions, religions, and cultures don’t render their

universality invalid. Those individuals who live in freedom, have the responsibility to stand up for the rights to freedom for those who are deprived of such rights. The right to freedom and human dignity are inseparable.

Liberalism serves to strengthen individual rights and not the strengthen the rights of survival of the fittest. This idea behind a liberal constitutional state also applies to nations. A liberal civil society based on a global order requires a global set of laws. The United Nations has to be reformed and further developed into an international peace-keeper. International law can't protect itself. Instead, it must be protected from the international community of free constitutional states. Those who reject securing peace and freedom –when necessary with military power, reject lending a helping hand to those in times of need. People who murder, torture, and rape shouldn't be allowed to feel safe from the long arm of the law anywhere. War criminals need to be brought before an international criminal court.

Lasting peace requires the a peace between cultures. Peace isn't possible when two people are enemies. Freedom isn't possible when there is intolerance. United Germany is an open and worldly nation of culture. The Liberal Party acknowledges the exchange of ideas between cultures.

Today, dangers for world security and stability are starvation, underdevelopment, ecological collapse, distribution of nuclear weapons, immigration, and the mass of refugees. These are a breeding ground for ethnic conflicts, violence, abuse of power, totalitarian ideology, as well as religious and political fundamentalism. That is why civil society's political responsibility begins with the fight against the causes of such conflicts. The Liberal Party encourages a global partnership for development and the environment based on free world trade, extensive economic cooperation, and the protection of natural resources.

Underdevelopment and population growth are the main causes for the magnitude of poverty in large parts of the world. It is the responsibility of all nations to find answers to these challenges. We acknowledge are responsibility to work together, so that we may overcome the poverty that separates North and South. A partnership for development is for the Liberal Party the obligation to help people in times of crisis.

We place our trust in individual responsibility and initiative of each partner nation. Education and training are the keys to growth and prosperity.

The Liberal Party trusts in free world trade –the opening of world markets. In interest of developing countries, we oppose protectionism and trade barriers. Those who open themselves up economically, who allow a free market economy, have to allow freedom and human rights into their land. In the long run, no nation can allow its citizens the one and deny the other. We protect freedom best, when everywhere in the world we help push through plans for liberal societies.

Responsibility for the future requires that we put an end to the destruction of nature. Those who destroy the natural basis of our existence shouldn't be able to use national sovereignty as an excuse. Those who plunder their own resources, create losses for us all. Environmental policy is global domestic policy today. Effective environmental protection requires international environmental policy. The international protection of the environment belongs in the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice at the Hague, Netherlands.

IV. The Principle of Responsibility for Future Generations

Each and every generation is committed to protecting the chances for freedom for the next generation, and to avoid putting them at risk, because of liabilities and consumption.

1. The Free Ecological Market Economy

A responsible society protects its natural resources. This includes biological diversity. It is an important prerequisite for nature's ability to adapt to new environmental conditions. The Liberal Party is countering an ecological plan economy run by the government with an ecological free market economy in private hands. The so-called *Verursacherprinzip* (Those who create a need for environmental protection have to pay for it.) leads to a more effective and efficient protection of the environment. Those who take care of the environment have to be treated better in terms of money, than those who damage the environment. The Liberal Party calls for the further

development of the free social market economy to a free socioecological market economy.

Our goal is a structural change towards more sustainable forms of economic activity. The use of renewable resources is limited by the rate at which such resources regenerate. The use of non-renewable resources, however, must take into account the needs of future generations. For this reason, resource productivity has to be increased. We, therefore, require technical and organizational innovation, which in turn calls for a new ways of thinking by both producers as well as consumers. This includes doing research and putting into application new technical procedures, that allow a highly efficient transformation of energy and (natural) resources. In addition to this, governmental framework has to be restructured, so that environmental protection and conservation effect the economic interests of companies and individuals. What's required, is the implementation of economic factors –especially the introduction of environmental protection certificates and changing the present tax system, so that it doesn't hinder the creation of jobs or capital growth, but instead, taxes environmentally destructive consumption heavily.

A new ecological orientation by means of an free socioecological market economy doesn't necessary lead to the removal of all government requirements. It can, however, make many of these requirements unnecessary and help make environmental politic more plausible, thereby making them more understandable. Environmental protection can't be practiced, just because the government orders it. More so, environmental protection is only then effective, when its practice plays up to the sensibilities in people. What the Liberal Party wants, is a transformation of values through more awareness.

The inclusion of environmental protection in the German Constitution is based on the society's belief, that the government has a responsibility to future generations and their natural living environment. The new Article 20a (Protection of the Natural Living Environment) in the German Constitution is formulated accordingly: "Bearing responsibility for future generations, the state shall protect the natural living environment within the framework of the Constitution by legislation and, according to law and justice, by executive and judiciary." In addition to protecting the natural

environment, the government also has to protect the structural and political foundations of future generations.

2. The Modest State

The nation's debt deprives future generation's of their freedom and hopes. If the nation's debt is going to be reduced, then the possibility of creating more new debt has to be restricted by constitutional amendment. A balanced budget has to be achieved in all areas of government in various steps inside of ten years. After this, expenditures shouldn't be allowed to exceed revenues. Credit shouldn't be allowed to be counted as revenue. Article 115 of the German Constitution (Taking of Credit and Credit Guarantee) should be changed accordingly.

Article 115 of the German Constitution – where government's ability to acquire new credit is only limited by expenditures for investments- is inadequate. And because the ability to take unlimited credit to ward off substantial economic disturbances is allowed, there has been no effective limit as to credit taking. The difference between expenditures for consumption and those for investment remain ambiguous. At present, prosperity is being financed by credit at the expense of the future. On account of this, the nation's rising debt will soon lead to the fact that interest and amortization fees will make up the largest part of the nation's budget. Coming generations have a right not to be burdened like this. An individual has the right to deny his or her inheritance, future generations, however, don't.

By way of constitutional amendment, a ceiling has to be set which limits the total burden of taxes and fees imposed on citizens. The total burden on the taxpayer shouldn't exceed one-third. Two-thirds of that which taxpayers earn should –on an average- remain in their pockets. In addition to this, the highest individual tax rate has to be anchored down in the Constitution. The government has to allow individuals to have more than what it takes from them. For this reason, the Constitution has to be amended to include the right, that the total tax burden imposed individuals shouldn't exceed more than half their income.

The government's share of public revenue has to be reduced to one-third of the GNP. When at present, every other Deutsche Mark passes through government hands, then what we have is not a free market economy, but rather, a plan market economy run by government.

For those who want to introduce new taxes, a two-third majority in parliament should be required in the future. The ability to introduce new taxes has to be just as difficult as amending the Constitution. Taxes which aren't imposed any longer, have to be removed from Article 106 of the German Constitution (Distribution of Taxes). In this way, the reintroduction of obsolete taxes can be stopped. But also supplemental tax legislation should be removed from Article 106, so that permanent tax increases don't result as of supplementary taxation.

In the future, Government programs requiring expenditures should require specific dates for when they run out. All obligations that are entered into shouldn't be allowed to run pass this date. If the program should continue after this date, a completely new resolution must be passed. Not limiting government programs to a specific time frame, means running the risk of turning temporary assistance into long-term subvention.

The Constitution has to be amended to include legislation for commercialization of certain public services. Federal, state, and local officials have to give priority to private citizens when performing certain tasks, provided that reaching a task's objective isn't affected negatively and performing such a task commercially is just as economical as performing it by civil servants. In interest of future generations, government expenditures have to be gradually shifted from consumption to investment. Concerning expenditures for consumption, education, and science have to be given the highest priority due to their immense significance for the future of our society.

If we are going to reach our goal of consolidating the nations budget, then there has to be a relation between constitutional limits on taxes, constitutional amendments with regard to a balanced budget and commercialization of public services. If, for example, the Constitution were only to limit the tax burden and the government

consumed an overtly high portion of the GNP, then this consumption could simply be financed by the government taking on more credit. Conversely, if the Constitution were to require that government balance the nations budget and the government consumed, once again, an overtly high portion of the GNP, then the consumption could instead be financed by higher taxes and fees. And, an amendment to commercialize certain government services takes away any real possibility of government financing its own consumption through state-owned companies. Such measures would cut-off an unrestrained government from its main income sources.

An individual's ability to rule over him or herself and over his or her own property determines the degree of freedom and responsibility in a society. That's why liberal constitutions guarantee the basic human right of private property. This basic right has to be protected against indirect expropriation through taxation and government fees. Otherwise, the nation's debt is going to lead to tomorrow's tax increases.

Constitutional rights are an individual's rights of defense and protection against and from the government. The government isn't god. It can't do anything it wants. This goes for an individual's right to protection from taxation and national debt, in which democracy is reduced to bureaucracy. Even freedom is threatened by a government that can't be financed and by a government that, because of more and more taxes, fees, bureaucracy, and administration, shrinks an individual's freedom and willingness to take responsibility. For this reason, our current system of employing civil servants has to be done away with, except in all those areas of strategic importance. The Liberal Party demands a systematic retreat from debt-ridden government. As a consequence, the "modest state" has to be anchored down in the constitution.

3. For a New Contract between Generations

For a reliable contract between generations, we need to change are thinking. The mandatory government forms of social insurance i.e.; Social Security, unemployment and health insurance, et cetera, won't alone be able to guarantee social stability in the future. Therefore, what's required is more personal responsibility and flexibility when dealing with social insurance and insurance in general. Concerning the main

question of retirement, what we need for a reliable contract between generations are more possibilities to generate capital and more ways of covering the capital costs for retirement. Today's form of retirement relies too heavily on mandatory government pensions funds (Social Security), that are then financed through mandatory worker contributions. Even if Social Security were to be extended to include company-based pension funds, individuals still couldn't rely on these funds to insure their standard of living after retirement. Early retirement plans that disadvantage third parties have made the situation worse. We need to completely overhaul the entire retirement system. It has to acknowledge the work done by older people and allow them to live a good life in their old age. The aim of a liberal reform is securing Social Security, creating social justice for workers of all ages, and stabilizing pension contributions.

In those areas where politics can influence – and must influence, the chances of young workers having a secure retirement depends on the amount(s) of money we (government) allocate towards Social Security by means of debt reduction. The size of Social Security's pension funds along with the quality of education, training, and the overall state of the economy determine how high tomorrow's GNP will be from which retirement benefits will be paid.

Although contributions rates to Social Security are constantly on the rise, its ability to provide real "security" has continually deteriorated. Rising contribution rates take away the financial power which could otherwise be used to create an individual retirement plan. That's why creating reliable Social Security for younger workers today means establishing a higher age of retirement, as well as working flexible hours before entering completely into retirement. Accordingly, we need to distance ourselves from the wrong idea of early retirement. The previous changes to retirement are ineffective, because they've only stopped the increase in contribution rates due to the simple fact that "something – anything" had to be done. Such changes haven't provided a sound basis for retirement, nor have they had a stabilizing effect on contributions to Social Security.

Dependable retirement requires more free room for more personal responsibility. It requires better macroeconomics for individuals to save towards their own retirement and capital growth to secure younger generation's ability to choose freely.

Making responsible provisions for one's own retirement can be achieved by a variety of measures from real estate ownership to capital investments with different yields and risks.

The mandatory Social Security system has to be reformed. It mustn't be allowed to hinder the investment possibilities of younger generations in alternative investment forms on account of high contribution rates. By allowing individuals to decide their retirement plans for themselves, the decision remains by them, as to the proportion of Social Security, company pension fund, and private capital based investments they use to finance their retirement plans and those of their children.

In this respect, politics has to do its job of moving in the direction of changing the tax system and lowering taxes. Capital gains and switching from one investment form to another has to be exempt from taxes.

The tax discrimination against retirement plans primarily financed through private investments as opposed to mandatory Social Security has to be stopped. Treating investment forms equally provides more free room for individuals to privately save and pay for their own retirement. Further, a liberal tax reform would prevent the systematical waste of money today that occurs due to mismanaged pension funds. Such a reform would be an effective starting point for a reliable contract between generations: built upon the basis of better capital investments for younger generations and without creating agreements that disadvantage third parties.

Growing government expenditures have resulted in increased government bureaucracy. Each new civil servant that is hired results in irreversible pension costs in the future. The current government pension responsibilities already threaten to become tomorrow's debt and taxes. That's why the government has to commit itself today to reform, in order to provide for the tomorrow's pensions. The government has to set aside money out of the budget today, when committing itself to employing another civil servant until his or her retirement. The pension funds that exist on a federal, state, and community level restrict today's generation from providing for its own retirement.

4. Thinking about Future Generations

For the Liberal Party, solidarity is also the solidarity between generations. Once a year, the federal government has to present a report as to the extent at which future generations are affected by today's spending. It has to list all expenditures and revenues: on the one side the investments for such things as education, training, infrastructure, and Social Security; on the other side the costs for such investments – national debt, pensions, and other agreements made by the government. This so-called “report on future generations” encourages more awareness for the responsibility we have towards future generations, but also, strengthens the bonds that hold generations together. Justice between generations results in securing the younger generation's future, while at the same time recognizing the life achievements of the older generation.

Resolution of the Federal Caucus of the FDP

Gera, Saxony,

December 11th - 12th, 1994

Call for a commission to draft a party platform.

A commission is to be called under the direction of the General Secretary. Pending its usual federal party caucus in 1996, the purpose of this commission is to draft a preliminary party platform with the help of its so-called outlook commission, all members of the FDP, and the general public based upon the initial draft "The Move Towards Freedom" from Spring 1994. The commission's aim will be to illustrate basic principles and values of modern liberalism, to identify the tremendous challenges that society will face in various areas of politics in the coming years, and to develop liberal answers for these challenges.

In its assembly from February 20th, 1995, the Federal Executive Committee has called the following individuals as members of the commission.

Hans-Jürgen Beerfelz, Arnd Brummer, Dr. Werner Bruns, Dr. Walter Döring, Dr. Fritz Flizar, Birgit Homburger, Dr. Werner Hoyer, Michael Kauch, Wolfgang Knoll, Prof. Dr. Werner Maihofer, Prof. Dr. Rainer Ortleb, Ruth Wagner, Dr. Guido Westerwelle (Commission President)

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