

The Camberwell Declaration
Friday 7 November 2014
0700 hrs

Exactly six months from now the polls for the 2015 United Kingdom General Election will open. British politics currently lacks a credible progressive party that argues against the lunacy of UKIP and the Conservative Party, who blame Britain's troubles on the EU and immigration. The existing alternatives do not inspire confidence. The Labour Party, poorly led, is suffering from an agonising crisis of identity. The Liberal Democrats have been fatally compromised by Coalition with the Tories. The Greens haven't moved to the centre ground. Therefore the Whig Party has returned to stand up for progress, intelligence, and decency, and to help create a better kind of politics.

The internet and social media have changed everything except politics – until now

Across our public and private life, the internet and social media have transformed the way that we communicate. Information has been democratised. The current generation is the most politically-aware generation ever; by using smartphones to access BBC News, Twitter, Facebook, Buzzfeed, and Huffpost, voters are aware of trends in politics and society to a degree that would have been inconceivable just 20 years ago. The main political parties have not adjusted to this revolution. They are still pushing out information from the centre in one direction. Being unresponsive to the needs of voters, they alienate young people, who are tired of being patronised by an outdated political establishment. We're going to change this. The Whig campaign is going to be based around social media, and our campaign will be a conversation, not a lecture.

Being engaged in politics is part of a normal civilised life – not just for a narrow political 'elite'

Politics should be part of a normal civilised life, just as much as culture or sport. We believe that the British political system is simple and transparent, and that the problem lies with the current crop of Westminster politicians, who increasingly come from a very narrow section of society that has never worked outside politics. The hostility towards this class of professionalised politicians could be felt during the Scottish referendum, and explains the rise of UKIP. The three main parties are unable to adapt because they are now led by members of this class. The Whigs believe that there is far more wisdom about politics outside Westminster than there is inside, and that this needs to be harnessed for the good of the country. The best people to represent a constituency are the people who live there. When central offices in London think they know better, they reveal their contempt for the electorate. This is why the Whig Party will seek applications for parliamentary candidates in every constituency, and application forms will be published on whigs.uk later this month.

Voting is the only way to create real change – those who don't vote suffer the consequences

Whigs have always believed in the supremacy of Parliament over any unelected power, whether the Crown or the crowd. The 2010 General Election and 2014 European Election showed that the young and poor are disengaged from the political process. Occupy, the People's Assembly, and Russell Brand have responded to this, but without managing to change much. Protests and demonstrations can be ignored. Votes can't. The worst elements of the Coalition programme – raising tuition fees, the bedroom tax, disability welfare cuts – fall on those who do not vote: the young, the poor, the disabled. Meanwhile the interests of those who do vote – homeowners and pensioners – are protected, even in a time of so-called 'austerity'. The Tories and Labour may not want mass voter participation, but the Whigs certainly do. If you think that our options for the General Election are not good enough, then don't not vote. Help to build something that is good enough.

What we are proposing is not revolutionary. British politics has an ancient tradition of progress, optimism, and self-belief, which was carried by the Whig Party for hundreds of years. While there still seems to be a place for Tories in British politics; to defend the established interests of the wealthy in an unequal society; we believe that the Labour Party and Liberal Democrats are stuck in the 20th Century. On Thursday 7 May 2015 progressive voters will be able to vote for a 21st Century party that sits at the centre of British politics.

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On behalf of The Whig Party

