

RETURN TO FREEDOM

**Manifesto for a new British
political party**

THE CONFEDERATION & REFORM PARTY

CORE

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(A work in progress)

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Introduction

The Confederation & Reform Party does not exist, but it is a party which *ought* to exist.

Great Britain is like a grand old ocean liner heading for a reef. Not an invisible, submerged reef, a clearly visible and avoidable one. Visible, that is, to those with eyes to see and minds to think. If our course is not corrected, sooner or later disaster will strike. The British economy will expire, strangled by red tape and swamped by government debt; the country's paper money mountain will collapse, and there will be widespread starvation and internal strife.

Even more than a liner, however, the 'Ship of State' takes a lot of turning round. The like-minded people who might create The Confederation & Reform Party would do so knowing that their efforts were strictly long-term and that, initially, they would probably be ignored or ridiculed.

Yet the prospect of a long struggle to gain attention and be taken seriously is no argument for inaction. Only by the constant presentation and reiteration of true alternatives to present policies and practices can change come about. The British Isles have the potential to be heaven on earth, an utopia. Successive governments have turned them into the opposite, a Dystopia, and one with a capital D.

Why a new party? Because the Conservatives are an abject failure when it comes to restoring liberty and common sense. 'Me-tooism' has been their secret credo for a hundred years or more. Whatever socialists have introduced the Tories have adopted. Me too! Me too! They no longer *stand* for anything.

Worse, under their present leadership, the Tories seem to have neither a sense of direction nor awareness of what is important. Instead of focussing on the really vital issues – such as Britain's relationship with Europe, or preserving the union with Scotland – they have fuffed around with an astronomically expensive railway line that nobody wants or needs, and intrusive, fatuous irrelevancies such as same-sex 'marriage.'

Yet a return to individual freedom, to individual responsibility, to national independence, and to reinforcement of mutual security, are the solutions to virtually all the ills Britain faces. The Confederation & Reform Party's goal is to persuade all rational Britons to accept these truths.

The Founding Principles

All human beings are ends in themselves, they do not exist to serve any other purpose. For this reason, each human individual has an inalienable right to his or her own life and equally inalienable rights to liberty, property and self-defence, without which human life is not possible.

In a civilised society, all citizens are obliged to respect the rights of others. If they do not, say by stealing another's property, they suspend their own rights until restitution is made.

In Britain today, government behaves as if no such principles exist. It rides roughshod over liberty and property and through its reckless actions threatens the very existence of both.

The collectivistic expression 'human rights' is a misnomer: there are only individual rights. Nor can people have 'rights' to anything which implies provision of goods or services by others. A 'right to an education' for example would imply that somebody else is obliged to provide it, which is enslavement.

The central philosophical objective of CORE is to bring *individual* rights – rights to life, liberty, property and self defence – back to where they belong, at the forefront of any political discussion.

At the same time, CORE intends to promote the concept that these British Isles of ours are not a single, uniform, consolidated block, but a free and voluntary union of four peoples: the English, the Welsh, the Scots and the Irish, living in many distinct, self-governing communities. True, in the past, the more numerous English have dominated their neighbours and sought to control them by force. Those days are gone. The future belongs to persuasion, cooperation, and local independence, all tending towards two interrelated goals: mutual respect, and common security.

CORE'S Main Political Objectives

To free individuals from shackles imposed by the State.

Vastly to reduce taxation and to get rid of many particular taxes.

To free the economy from State regulation and control.

To dismantle the Welfare State.

To introduce constitutional measures that will in future prevent the State from being hijacked by self-serving politicians and their supporters.

To introduce competition into the administration of justice and law enforcement.

To withdraw from the European Union, but not from full cooperation and unhampered free trade with all other European countries.

To reorganise the government of the British Isles into an alliance of four countries – England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland – together with associated communities such as the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, and newly, the Orkney and Shetland Islands.

To pursue worldwide free trade and bring an end to protectionism.

To end military interventions overseas, and to pursue worldwide disarmament, while ensuring that the defences of the British Isles are both superlative and adequate to face current dangers.

The Immediate Stimulus

In order to revive the economy fully, a CORE government would institute certain policies immediately. Amongst these would be:

The minimum wage, a major contributor to unemployment, would be abolished.

Job seekers' allowance and unemployment benefit, two other major disincentives to employment, would be phased out.

All State-imposed business costs, such as paid maternity leave, part-time holiday pay, and compulsory redundancy payments, would be gradually eliminated. It would be up to individuals to negotiate their terms of employment.

No person would be forced to join a trades union as a condition of employment, and no person would be forced to pay union dues against their will.

Young people under the age of 21 would be exempt from income tax.

Road tax for lorries would be cut immediately, say to the lowest level found in Europe. Duty on petrol would also be cut.

Income tax for adults would start on incomes over £10,000. Between £10,000 and £100,000 the rate would be 10%. Over £100,000 the rate would be 20%. The tax would be levied on total income from all sources, including salaries, rents, dividends, interest, winnings, or any other form of income. There would be no exemptions. Businesses collecting taxes via PAYE would be reimbursed for the costs involved.

VAT would be renamed Sales Tax and levied on ALL retail sales at a rate of 5%. Those collecting it would keep an agreed portion to cover the cost of collection.

There would be an immediate, across-the-board cut of 2.5% in the salaries and wages of all those employed by government, in whatever capacity and at whatever level, except for medical personnel in the NHS, police, and military personnel.

In future, no civilian employed by government, except for (temporarily) senior medical personnel in the NHS, would be paid more than the Prime Minister.

Daily interest at 10% would become chargeable automatically on business invoices not paid within the agreed time.

Goods paying excise duties, such as petrol, alcohol and tobacco, would be exempt from Sales Tax. The current practice of levying tax on duty is as discreditable as it is avaricious.

Duty on alcoholic beverages would be charged at so many pence per degree of alcohol per standard unit of sale. For instance, were that 10p, beer or cider at 4° ABV would pay 40p per pint; wine at 12° (whether sparkling or not) would pay £1.20 per

bottle; spirits at 40° would pay £4.00 per 70cl bottle. Tobacco, in whatever form, would be taxed at a flat rate of so many pence per ounce of untreated leaf.

Stamp Duty on house purchases, Capital Gains Tax, Inheritance Tax (or death duties) and Petroleum Revenue Tax would be abolished immediately, along with many other particular taxes, such as that on insurance premiums.

The profits from the National Lottery would be entirely devoted to paying off the National Debt. Running the lottery would be handed over to Mr Richard Branson, if he still so wishes, who once offered to do the job for free.

Constitutional Reforms

The House of Lords would be renamed the House of Peers and would be entirely elected. Hereditary and Church of England seats would be abolished. There would be approximately 100 Peers, elected specifically to represent the counties and great cities. The Commons would represent the citizens as individuals. The two houses would be equal in authority. Commons' constituencies would be re-evaluated to make them as nearly as possible equal in number of citizens.

Aristocratic titles would cease to have any legal significance but those who inherit them would be free to continue using them if they so chose.

A national competition would be held to rename the House of Commons, which name smacks of the old class system. The chamber would be enlarged so that every member had a place to sit.

To become law, a measure would have to be supported by two thirds of the members of both houses. All members would be required to vote, no abstentions or absences would be permitted. To obtain a seat, a candidate to either house would have to have the backing of 51% of the registered electors in that constituency, and at least three quarters of the electors must have voted in the election. Law-making functions could no longer be delegated to State agencies.

Seats would be held for six years. Elections would be held every two years, but staggered, one third of members being elected at a time. No member could serve for more than two terms. Election day would be fixed, say May 1, the Prime Minister would no longer set the date. MP's would cease to have salaries and pensions. Parliamentary business would be greatly reduced so that members could continue to earn their livings in their chosen profession.

The Prime Minister would be elected by the members of both houses acting together, and would need to win the support of 51% of the members of each house. He or she would have to be at least 40 years old; to have a university degree; to have worked successfully for at least fifteen years in a business or profession outside government, and be fluent in a second language. The position would be held for five years. Constitutional changes would be established by referendum.

Subsidisation of bars and restaurants inside the Palace of Westminster would cease. All such facilities would be franchised out and would charge the same prices as similar establishments outside Parliament.

Parliament would be constitutionally forbidden from interfering in the economy. Similarly, deficit spending and government borrowing would be prohibited. The Budget would not only balance, but produce a substantial annual surplus dedicated to paying off the National Debt.

All departments of government, at every level, would be prohibited from giving taxpayers' money to private charities.

Confederation

In order to satisfy the natural desire for independence amongst peoples of Celtic rather than Anglo-Saxon descent; to preserve the many ties that bind us together; and to acknowledge and honour the mutual respect that our diverse peoples owe each other, CORE will pursue a redefinition of the political organisation of the British Isles.

No longer would citizens be 'governed' from Westminster. Rather, the four countries forming the Confederation would take care of their own affairs from their own capitals. Westminster would house the headquarters of the Confederation alone – the federal parliament – its main roles being to co-ordinate the defense of the British Isles and any other matters requiring inter-governmental cooperation. No doubt too, for convenience, London might continue to be home to the English Parliament, though there is no reason why Parliament should not move from major city to major city in a regular pattern: Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, York... etc.

To be sure, the Irish have already achieved independence and many of them will no doubt look askance at any suggestion of reunion. Yet unity among the four peoples of the British Isles is a highly desirable goal which should be pursued vigorously. The practical and economic advantages of common defense are vast.

In order to demonstrate that the new arrangement was truly amongst equals, and to dispel historical memories of dominance by one, attention might be given to finding a new name for the associated countries, for example, the British Isles Federation, but that is something for future discussion.

Confederation would be along the same lines as Switzerland, wherein each Canton is self-governing and where there is a high degree of independence and local control even down to village level.

An historical example can be found in the American Articles of Confederation – the original treaty between the Thirteen Colonies of North America after independence from Britain – that is, until the coup d'état carried out by the so-called 'Founding Fathers' laid the groundwork for the political monster that the USA has become.

The Welfare State

The Welfare State is the worst thing that has ever happened to Great Britain. It is a system for robbing Peter to bribe Paul. It was devised by politicians purely to serve their own interests, enabling them to “assume a halo of virtue by practicing charity with wealth that they do not own” (Ayn Rand), in other words, by giving their supporters other people’s money – taken by force through taxation.

For an act to be good it must be voluntary. Where coercion begins, goodness ends.

The Welfare State is a grossly immoral system, made the more so because in order to pay for it, politicians have borrowed trillions of pounds which they can never hope to repay, hence burdening our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren with immense debts.

The politicians and their functionaries have also continuously inflated the currency in order to avoid repaying what they have borrowed, in so doing hugely increasing business costs and destroying the value of savings and fixed incomes.

The consequences of Welfare State policies are dire. They have drained initiative, substituting a dependency culture, and created a subclass of spongers and parasites. Further, the Welfare State has attracted people from abroad who come to Britain in order to live at other’s expense.

The Confederation & Reform Party is dedicated to a gradual dismantling of the Welfare State. The following pages outline the sort of programme that would be instituted.

Child Benefit

This would be phased out over a period of years. Initially, the maximum number of children supported in a family would be cut to eight in the first year, six in the second, four in the third, two in the fourth. Simultaneously, the maximum age of the children to be supported would be cut to fourteen years old in the first year, twelve years in the second, ten in the third, eight in the fourth. After five years the benefit would cease entirely.

School leaving age would be cut in similar fashion; to fifteen in the first year, fourteen in the second, thirteen in the third, twelve in the fourth. After five years, mandatory school attendance would be abolished. The value of education is so obvious there is no need for it to be enforced by the State.

By exempting young people from income tax, a whole generation of new young entrepreneurs would be encouraged. Besides, a large percentage of children are unsuited to the regimented form of education imposed by the State. They will fare far better if left alone to make what they can of their lives by themselves.

All other benefits, such as Housing Benefit, would be phased out. While benefits were still being paid, a married man could claim for one dependant only. Incapacity Benefit and similar State assistance would be closed to new applicants and would cease when existing claimants passed away. Private charities would take over responsibility for those in need.

There would be no hindrance to those wishing to help the less fortunate, but they would have to do so by means of voluntary contributions or with their own money. It is clearly immoral to do otherwise. State aid can only be given by first seizing the money from those who own it or earn it, or by printing paper money, which devalues all money via inflation.

Pensions

The State pension scheme would be wound up. Existing pensioners would continue to be paid though those able to manage without would be asked to give up their pension. Their generosity would be publicly acknowledged.

The pension scheme would continue to operate for those over 40 years old unless they chose to opt out. It would however be closed to those under 40, who would be expected to make their own pension arrangements. Once the last State pensioners had died, the scheme would be closed down permanently.

Present State pensions would be substantially increased to compensate for the depreciation of Sterling. The State's policy of continually inflating the currency has hugely reduced the pound's buying power. Hence the money taken from pensioners during their working lives – supposedly to pay for their pensions when they retire – has greatly diminished in value by the time they need it most; i.e., when they stop earning.

Education

The State should never have become involved in education, the falling standards so evident everywhere are the inevitable consequence of bureaucratic management. The only way to produce excellence in any sphere is through profit-oriented private ownership and free and open competition. The Confederation & Reform Party intends to end government involvement in education.

Thus, all State-owned schools, from primary to university level, will first be reorganised to run as businesses, that is, all schools will become fee-paying. They will then be privatised by free share distribution to all citizens. All citizens have paid for them through taxation, regardless whether they have children, so the institutions belong, singly and collectively, to all citizens.

The Student Loan Company would be privatised, possibly as a charity, but would remain in business offering low-cost loans to those seeking education but lacking the means. It might be included with other former State agencies – e.g. the Met Office, Civil Aviation Authority, and Land Registry – in a general services corporation privatised by free share distribution.

The practice of giving Ritalin, or other such drugs, to hyperactive schoolchildren would be banned. Non-medical approaches must be sought for a condition which, while inconvenient for parents and teachers, is usually caused merely by an energetic child *being a child*.

Once the transfer of ownership of educational establishments is complete, the Ministry of Education will be wound up and all State attempts to control or influence education will stop.

The divide between public and private education would thus be dissolved at a stroke. *All* education would be private, as it should be.

Health

As with education, the State should never have become involved in healthcare. Without denying the wonderful work done by the vast majority of those employed by the NHS, hardly a week goes by without some new horror story involving State medicine. This is due to the nature of bureaucratic management in which the interests of State employees automatically take precedence over the needs of those whom they are supposed to serve; and to the fact that the NHS is a virtual monopoly, monopoly status inevitably resulting in greater costs, lower quality, and indifferent service. Britons could very easily have the best health care in the world but they will only get it if they get the State out of it.

Too often, the NHS has become a political football, with rival political parties competing for votes on the basis of how much they claim to have done, or claim that they will do, to enhance the health service.

The Confederation & Reform Party would begin by separating health *insurance* from health *care*. All persons currently paying national health insurance would automatically become customers of, and shareholders in, a new insurance company, the British Isles Health Insurance Corporation, BIHIC. However, customers would not be obliged to stay with BIHIC and could sell their shares if they so wished. Other insurance companies would be free to offer competing policies. They would also be free to acquire and operate their own medical facilities.

Buying health insurance would no longer be compulsory. But those who neglected to pay BIHIC premiums or take out a policy with another company could find themselves without medical care in time of need. No doubt though, hospitals would return to the former practice of running charity wings, and kind-hearted GPs would no doubt accept payment in kind as they did in the past.

While the separation of health insurance and health care was being accomplished, all State hospitals and medical establishments would be reorganised to run as businesses, charging fees for their services. Once this was completed, ownership of all government-owned health facilities would be transferred to the citizens as free shares.

The need for hospitals and doctors to be, and to be seen to be, excellent, in a competitive environment, would quickly eliminate the ills that beset the NHS.

NICE (the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) would lose any legal authority, but might remain in existence as an advisory body for doctors – run jointly, and paid for, by British providers of health care. Too often NICE's dictats are based on non-medical concerns, such as costs, or on dubious science: for instance, reliance on incomplete statistics, or drawing conclusions from reviews of other scientists' work rather than from engaging in actual scientific research.

Ways would be sought to privatise matters of 'public health'. For instance, insurance companies could very well carry out the inspections of food preparation establishments currently undertaken by local councils. Customers would avoid places with no liability insurance.

Criminal Law Reform

The Confederation & Reform Party has two main goals in criminal law reform: 1) to shift the emphasis of law enforcement to crime *prevention* and, 2) when crime occurs, to shift the emphasis from punishment to *restitution*.

Sending criminals to prison is more or less pointless. It often has no deterrent effect; it is extremely costly, and it does nothing at all for the *victims* of crime. Parents whose child is murdered by a gang of thugs gain no compensation for their loss when the gang members are imprisoned; householders get none of their stolen property back when the thief gets a few years in jail.

A CORE government would see to it that all the possessions of a murderer were seized to compensate the family of the victim. A life sentence would mean *life*. Lifers without means would be required to earn money to repay victims' families. If no family exists, the amounts raised would be deposited in a fund for the victims of unsolved crimes.

Likewise, convicted thieves would be required to account for everything they had stolen, returning it where possible. Their possessions would be seized to replace what they could not return, and future earnings would be sequestered to the extent necessary to compensate those robbed. Thieves would be tagged and closely monitored until such time as they had returned all the stolen goods, or equivalent value, for life if necessary.

The reintroduction of birching for crimes of physical violence such as rape, wounding, unprovoked assault, and injuries inflicted on others during the commission of a crime, would be the subject of a referendum. The deterrent effect of the penalty is proven: 'no man ever came back for a second birching' it used to be said. Criminals injured during the commission of crimes would have no claim against the persons who injured them. Persons defending themselves or their property against attackers or intruders would be exempt from any charges, even if the intrusion results in the death of the intruder.

In the field of crime prevention, the first step of the Confederation & Reform Party would be to decriminalise all 'recreational' drugs, including so-called Class A ones. The current prohibition is a total failure – the drugs are readily available everywhere. There is plainly no point in expending huge amounts of money and manpower on what is effectively the flogging of a dead horse. All those currently in prison purely on drugs charges would be released.

Just as alcohol prohibition did in the USA, drug prohibition has merely created a new criminal class. It has also turned young people into criminals, and led to an enormous increase in crime such as petty theft, muggings and housebreakings. The illicit drugs are expensive, leading users to crime to fund their habits or pastimes. Far better control would be achieved by leaving individuals fully responsible for the results of their actions; by better education; by exclusion of drug usage from health insurance, and by letting a free market bring prices down.

All other 'victimless crimes,' such as prostitution and illicit gambling, would be decriminalised. Individual behaviour is not the responsibility of the State.

The second major initiative of the Confederation & Reform Party in preventing crime would be to allow cities, towns and villages to hire private companies to provide security and solve crimes against persons and property. In other words, the State monopoly on crime prevention and resolution would end. Private companies, on limited contracts and vying to preserve and enhance their reputations, can be expected to do a far better job than existing police forces which, despite being manned for the most part by brave, honest and willing men and women, are all too often hampered by rules and regulations and excessive paperwork, and by the natural consequences of being a monopoly. Hence they frequently fail to prevent crime and some of their clear-up rates are abysmal.

The third major initiative would be to turn large areas of the law over to private arbiters or arbitration companies. Commercial law, for example, was once managed very successfully by the Law Merchant, that is, by the merchants themselves. There is no reason why it should not be so again.

All solicitors and judges would be free to offer private arbitration services, and since the purpose of arbitration is to find a solution to which both parties can agree, one can expect that disputes will be *resolved*, not drag on endlessly as they so often do now. Plaintiffs would be the persons who considered themselves to have been harmed.

A fourth initiative would be to clean up the statute book. There are a host of matters which successive governments have labelled 'crimes', or 'criminal offences', which are in fact nothing of the kind. A crime is an act which harms persons or their property. Acts do not become crimes by government say-so, yet throughout our history that is exactly what has happened. Often minor clerical errors are labelled 'crimes' or 'serious offences', such as late filing of some licence or other. This is pure tyranny, the sole purpose being to terrify people into *obedience* which, at the end of the day, is all the State is really interested in.

A CORE government, motivated solely by the desire to protect persons and property would become the 'party of repeal' replacing innumerable 'crimes' or 'serious offences' with simple, civil penalties such as interest on unpaid fees or charges.

The Confederation & Reform Party would take the State out of the marriage business. Its record therein is hardly a success story. Instead, local solicitors would offer marriage contracts with clear provisions for disposition of property, care of children, etc, in case of breakdown, plus insurance against such happening, or against multiple births, etc. Solicitors would also act as advisors, encouraging young people to avoid matrimony until such time as they could afford to raise children. People of the same sex who aspired to 'marry' would have to find a solicitor willing to write their contract. The current law would be repealed.

The archaic practice of wearing Eighteenth century wigs in court would end, it makes the proceedings appear farcical. Barristers would lose their quasi-monopoly on court appearances. Defendants and plaintiffs would be free to appoint any representative.

The Economy

The State is an interloper in the economy, its presence a massive burden which does nothing but harm. All the great economic catastrophes in history have been caused, not by 'market failure', but by State interference. The crash of 2008, for instance, was caused initially by US government interference in the mortgage market.

An economy runs itself, it does NOT need management or regulation from outside. The Confederation & Reform Party is dedicated to creating a truly free market economy in the British Isles, a market which is just that, *free*.

To this end, the following measures would be taken:

Insider trading laws would be repealed, and all other laws of that ilk. We managed without them for centuries, until very recently in fact. The motivations behind such laws are uniformly disreputable; including such factors as ignorance of economics, arrogant paternalism, power lust, games of political football, jealousy, 'jobs for the boys' or, through fines and fees, outright looting. Those who impose and enforce them don't understand how markets work and don't like other people getting rich. As soon as any enterprise succeeds it immediately becomes a target for politicians and others bent on pandering to envy, "the most anti-social and evil of all passions" (John Stuart Mill).

All regulatory agencies would be wound up, such as the Prudential Regulation Authority, the Financial Conduct Authority, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, the Office of Fair Trading, the Competition Commission, the Advertising Standards Authority, etc, etc, etc, plus all agencies devoted to regulating particular businesses or professions, such as Ofwat, Ofgen, Ofcom, Solicitors' Regulation Authority, etc, etc, etc. Ordinary laws against theft and fraud could easily take care of most matters controlled by these unnecessary and pernicious agencies with their myriads of imaginary 'crimes'.

The Treasury would be stripped of any regulatory functions and drastically slimmed down, becoming a simple collection agency: receiving tax money from those who collect it, investing it for maximum return, and paying out when requested to do so by Parliament.

As long as Income Tax exists, taxpayers would be required to register with a local firm of accountants who would submit a simple, single page, annual statement to the Treasury to the effect that "Citizen A's income from all sources was X amount, tax owing Y, cheque enclosed". Tax evasion would become a civil, not a criminal offence, naming and shaming in local papers being the sole penalty.

The long term goal of the Confederation & Reform Party is to dispense with Income Tax entirely. We survived for centuries without it, there is no reason why we should not do so again.

The Bank of England would no longer have any regulatory powers, such as setting a base rate, and would cease to control the money supply. It would become an ordinary bank and would be privatised by free share distribution.

The base rate is typical State hypocrisy. It blithely fixes rates itself, but if private institutions do the same, government officials puff themselves up in jealous outrage and start screeching about ‘crimes’.

The Royal Mint would be instructed to begin producing sufficient gold coinage for a modern economy. Embedded electronic coding could record ownership of new gold coins, while acrylic or other such coatings could protect against wear, shaving or clipping. Private minting companies would be free to compete with the Royal Mint.

The Banking Act would be repealed. The Bank of England would lose its monopoly on the issuance of banknotes. All banks would be free to issue their own notes backed by deposits of gold or other precious commodities. The Industrial Revolution occurred under just such a monetary system. There is every reason to expect that taking the State out of the economy and returning to gold money will bring about a similar explosion of wealth creation.

Royal Mail would lose its monopoly on first class mail. In return, any universal obligations re delivery and price would also be cancelled. Any other monopoly created by the State would be abolished: e.g., the BT monopoly on telephone landlines. This should never have been granted, but since the monopoly was created by the State, it is perfectly acceptable for the problem to be cured by the State. The monopoly would be ended, landlines being briefly renationalised then broken up and given to the citizens via free share distribution in the form of several new companies.

Numerous new shares in private hands can be expected to lead to new stock markets emerging all over Britain. Job Centres would be privatised.

Trademark, Patent, and Copyright laws would be examined to make sure they are actually necessary and do not inhibit innovation. If necessary, they would be overhauled or reduced in scope.

With the cooperation of neighbouring countries, the waters surrounding the British Isles would be divided up into privately-owned fisheries. The seabed is merely a continuation of the land. If one can have ownership of land one can have ownership of the sea.

The new fisheries would police their own waters and could be relied on not to overfish – in order to remain in business. Ownership would come about via free share distribution to the general population.

Waters close to shore, say up to a mile from land, would be open without charge to individuals (local fishmongers and sport fishers) for small catches for local sale or consumption, a right written into the articles of the new fishing companies.

Transportation

All roads would be organised into private companies on a city and county basis and privatised by free share distribution. Motorways would be privatised in a similar fashion.

The new road companies would obtain their income from annual fees, mileage charges and tolls. Motorists paying a fee in any one company's area would be free to travel in all. The companies would be allowed to widen and straighten roads and build bypasses and tunnels without planning permission, the only proviso being that they must obtain the uncoerced agreement of all those affected by any improvements. There would be an annual competition, with big prizes, for the best-kept roads.

The companies would police their own roads and would be empowered to ban dangerous, drugged or drunken drivers. In urban settings, they would be empowered to ban people for suitable periods who allowed dog-fouling, threw litter (including cigarette butts), urinated in the street, spat gum on pavements, sprayed graffiti, etc. The prospect of being unable to leave their own homes would be an effective cure for all such anti-social behaviour.

The companies – using as much force as necessary but no more – would also be empowered to clear obstacles to the free flow of traffic created by parked cars or crowds blocking pavements. Since roads would no longer be 'public', being rather privately owned by the citizens, persons who blocked roads or pavements would be committing trespass and would be dealt with accordingly. People wishing to hold fairs, markets, political demonstrations, etc, would require prior permission from road owners.

The DVLA would become a joint endeavour run by insurance companies.

The vastly expensive and virtually pointless HS2 project would be cancelled in favour of upgrading existing railway tracks. Network Rail would be given piecemeal to existing franchised railway companies. They have already payed enough in fees to cover the purchase price.

Former shareholders of Railtrack would be compensated for the theft of their property by the last Labour government.

The Thames Estuary airport would be given the go-ahead, but would be a purely private enterprise.

Once these programmes had been carried out the Ministry of Transport would be wound up, any remaining functions being privatised or shut down.

Local Government

With so much that is presently done by the State in private hands, local government would be vastly reduced and its authority and powers greatly curtailed. Local councillors would be unpaid, Council Tax and business rates would be abolished, refuse collection would be privatised, and voluntary means would be sought to fund any remaining tasks.

The vitiation of local government by the Conservatives in the 1970s would be reversed. Local communities would be free to form their own councils and would be free to ignore edicts from more remote institutions created by the government in Whitehall. However, new councils would have no power to tax, nor power to coerce. They would have to rely on persuasion to implement local initiatives, and would have to fund these themselves. Local planning would be in accordance with local covenants, mutually agreed amongst property owners.

Public libraries do a splendid job, but can be expected to do an even better one when they are privatised and no longer a drain on taxpayers.

Council houses would be formed into housing companies, and given to local citizens via free share distribution.

Councils would henceforth be constitutionally prohibited from playing any role in the housing market, either by building or owning residences or by attempting to fix, lower or in any way influence rents.

Immigrants found living on the streets or on other private property would be rounded up and deported immediately.

So-called 'travellers' would require clear permission in advance to park or stay overnight from the owners of the land. Any of them failing to do so, or refusing to pay rent or fees, would be treated as trespassers, evicted immediately, and required to pay compensation for any inconvenience caused.

A national commission would be set up to expose corruption in local government. There is evidence to suggest that local officials have accepted inducements to smooth the path for certain petitioners.

All departments of government, including local councils, would be forbidden from employing interpreters or translators or printing documents in foreign languages. Persons requiring such services would be required to pay for them themselves.

The Environment

Man-made global warming is an unproven hypothesis. Obviously, humankind's activities can affect certain environments, as with the pollution of rivers and seas, or by bad agricultural practices causing such things as the 1930s Dust Bowl in the USA.

But the notion that burning fossil fuels is causing worldwide temperatures to rise is flatly contradicted by a mass of other evidence, such as sunspot activity, changes in the earth's orbit, etc. Temperatures have actually been flat or unchanged for many years. Besides, the evidence from temperature records on which the hypothesis was built is either inaccurate or has been doctored, usually by State agencies.

The consequent hysteria over environmental issues has been generated almost entirely by ignorant, self-serving pressure groups; by those who like bossing other people around, and by politicians and others jumping on a convenient band wagon to further their own ends.

In any case, it is wildly irrational to spend fortunes on preventative measures when that which is to be prevented hasn't been proven to exist. One might as well spend the money on exorcisms.

A CORE government would vigorously enforce the law of nuisance against polluters; withdraw from entangling treaties which require huge expenditure for little apparent gain; cease to subsidise wind farms and suchlike, and encourage private individuals and companies to install solar panels or windmills if such were economical or financially viable.

A CORE government would also take the lead in organising clean-ups in the oceans, and in catching, say by satellite observation, ship owners or operators who dumped garbage overboard. Denying access to ports by those found guilty should end such obnoxious practices very quickly.

Britain would take the lead in cleaning up space. Decades of rocket launches by various states have littered the once pristine skies above us with huge amounts of potentially hazardous waste material. British space exploration companies would be encouraged to salvage whatever they could bring back to earth, much of it being very valuable. Claims of ownership to the material by foreign governments would be disregarded. When property is abandoned, 'finders keepers' is the applicable principle.

The possible issuance of false climate data by such agencies as NASA, or by university climatology departments, would be vigorously investigated and might bring about law suits.

The Countryside

The ban on hunting with dogs will be lifted, barbaric though the sport may be. What people get up to on private land is no business of government. Opponents will have to rely on persuasion, shaming, boycotting, etc.

Feudal tenure will cease. At some point in the future, say upon the death of the current landowner, tenant farmers will become the owners of the land they farm, past rents being deemed a sufficient purchase price. Present owners would be allowed to retain sufficient land surrounding their main residence to practice farming themselves if they so desired, if necessary buying out tenants to do so.

Much of land ownership in Britain is a hangover from the Norman Conquest, during and after which the invaders and their successors seized the land, parcelled it out among themselves, and forced the defenceless inhabitants to pay 'protection money', first in kind, later in cash. Land rents should have been abolished centuries ago.

In order to protect and preserve the countryside, Countryside Trusts will be established in each county. Their initial bases would be any land presently owned by central or local government: for example, royal estates (if the royals agreed); land owned by the Church of England; Forestry Commission land; property owned by National Parks, or land acquired by local councils in settlement of tax demands.

The purpose of the Trusts would be to preserve the countryside as countryside. To this end, they would persuade farmers and landowners to sign up to covenants, preserving farms as farms in perpetuity. The trusts would derive income from leisure parks, camp grounds and picnic sites; from building and renting discreet country cottages; from granting access to hikers, etc. They might also encourage landowners to bequeath their properties to the Trusts. Once fully functioning, ownership of the Trusts would be passed to the citizens via free share distribution.

The 'listing' and grading of historic buildings in town or country would cease. Conservation is only valid when it occurs through private ownership. Constraints imposed on those who live in 'listed buildings' or in National Parks would be lifted. Owners of 'stately homes' would be free to divide them up into apartments for rent or sale, or to demolish them in order to build more practical residences. No permission would be required.

Ways would be sought to wind up DEFRA and other such agencies, transferring their activities to farmers' associations or insurance companies.

Covenants would be established among private owners to preserve areas of natural beauty, scenic villages, old town centres, historic sites, etc. Planning by local councils would cease.

In order to reduce congestion on roads and railways, owners of office buildings and shops will be free to convert upper floors to accommodate staff, or to build new work places with that in mind. No planning permission would be needed.

Any and all agricultural subsidies would end.

Protection of seagulls would cease for inland urban areas. Cities or boroughs, such as Worcester or Cheltenham, where the birds have become major nuisances, would be free to exterminate them.

Shotgun licensing would end for farmers, landowners, organisers of shoots, or anybody who used a shotgun in the course of their work, or for recognised leisure activities such as clay pigeon shooting. Ridiculous non-crimes such as being late paying for a shotgun licence would be struck from the records and any fines imposed returned – with interest.

Ownership of handguns would be permitted for members of pistol shooting clubs and sporting teams.

Alcohol licensing laws would be greatly simplified, and licenses made much cheaper. The Beer Orders of 1983, which caused so much mayhem in the pubs trade, would be repealed. Beer brewed on the premises of individually-owned, single pubs, would be exempt from excise duty.

The stranglehold on distilling currently exercised by the State would cease. One could expect an immediate, rapid growth of new distilling industries.

Fracking would be permitted under private land as long as the companies took responsibility for, and made good, any damage caused – such as by subsidence or tremors – and shared the profits with those living above their operations, right down to owners of small houses or flats.

Immigration

Foreigners would continue to be welcome to settle in Britain regardless of nationality or place of origin. However, new rules would apply:

Anybody wishing to settle in Great Britain would be required to demonstrate that they had sufficient funds to live on for their first year of residency. They would also be tested to make sure they had sufficient command of English to be able to obey traffic signals, read street signs, and understand simple commands such as “Stop!” or “Watch out!”

Newcomers would be required to submit to a full medical examination and would be required to demonstrate that they had a comprehensive medical insurance policy from a recognised British insurance company.

Anybody found not to fulfil these requirements would be refused admission.

No immigrant would qualify for any State benefit, as long as such exist. They have not contributed, so why should they expect, or be given, help?

Any immigrant found guilty of a crime against persons or property would be stripped of their possessions to the extent necessary to compensate their victims, immediately deported whence they came, and banned from further entry. Any appeal would have to be conducted from their place of origin. Non-existent ‘rights’, such as to a family life, would no longer be recognised as a defence against deportation.

All cases where foreign-born criminals have been allowed to remain in Britain on such spurious grounds would be reviewed and the original judicial findings overturned as necessary. Law has often proved itself to be an ass, but nowhere more so than in recent judgements of this nature.

All deportees would be DNA tested, extensively photographed and x-rayed and their details published in newspapers and on the Parliamentary TV channel to discourage any from attempting to re-enter Britain secretly or in disguise.

Refugees from foreign conflicts or dictatorial regimes would be allowed entry without the above requirements but only into the care of charities established for the purpose – which would be required to make good whatever was missing, for instance, medical insurance.

The length of time needed to obtain British citizenship would be extended to seven years. It would be raised as a matter of public debate whether those seeking citizenship should be required to demonstrate a reasonable command of the English language.

Society

The age of majority would be returned to 21 years for all legal matters and for voting. Poor quality education has resulted in young people being, generally speaking, too ignorant of history and common sense to exercise mature judgement on important matters. Many children leave school with a poor command of arithmetic, unable to write legibly, and hardly able to speak English properly. How can young people be expected to make adult decisions when so poorly-equipped?

The tyranny of so-called 'health and safety' would be ended and the agency responsible wound up. Thereafter, the matters currently dealt with by the agency would be left up to insurance companies and common sense.

So-called 'social services' would lose the power to abduct children without having first demonstrated to a judge and jury that a child was clearly in danger. Said judges and juries would be organised in advance to be available in emergency cases.

The Charity Commission, that great enemy of charity, would be wound up and replaced by a voluntary organisation run by the charities themselves. The British are a very charitable people. They don't need arrogant, authoritarian bureaucrats telling them how to behave. Any fraudulent 'charities' would be dealt with under ordinary laws against fraud and theft.

Any State involvement in, or subsidisation of, sport would end.

Under a CORE government people would naturally be free to wear whatever clothes they liked. However, it would be enshrined in law that any business owner or owners would be equally free to deny admittance to fully veiled persons. Garments such as burkabs and niqabs have often been used as a disguise in the commission of crimes, so it plain common sense for the owners of shops, malls, markets, department stores and theatres, or the operators of taxis, busses, trains, ferries or aeroplanes, to refuse entry when faces and bodies are invisible. Should they welcome people wearing balaclavas?

Businesses, including pubs and restaurants, would be free to set up well-ventilated smoking areas indoors, as long as these were isolated from non-smoking areas.

Sellers of fruit and vegetables, other comestibles, and consumer goods, would be free to sell produce in former Imperial measures.

A statute of limitations would be introduced for sexual offences. Parents will be encouraged to explain matters to their children and, when or if an offence occurs, to tell children to report it immediately to parent, school or police. Sadly, such offences do occur but they should be dealt with quickly. The spectacle of old men being persecuted for alleged misbehaviour decades previously is a disgrace to reason and justice. Human memories become notoriously inaccurate or suspect with the passage of time and it is a sordid but well-known fact that some people are willing to tailor or embroider incidents from long ago in order to climb on compensation bandwagons.

Obviously, leniency would be balanced by proper restitution where cases can be clearly proven, particularly where children are involved. Children are neither physically, mentally nor emotionally equipped for sexual activity. Adults who seek sexual gratification with minors are plainly mentally ill. They should be required to undergo psychotherapy, and to pay compensation if need be, rather than being incarcerated.

Irrational or intrusive aspects of the Equalities Act would be repealed. For example, the absurd requirement that adoption agencies give children to homosexuals; the equally absurd demand that all buildings have wheelchair access, or the tyrannical insistence that B&Bs admit same-sex couples regardless of the owners' beliefs.

Such couples are grown-ups and should accept that they have no right to force their lifestyle on those who may dislike it or disapprove of it. Their money is as good as anybody's but if someone else doesn't want to take it, so be it. The 'politically correct' bigotry behind such tyrannical laws has no place in a free, decent society.

All 'equalities' commissions would be abolished. People are perfectly capable of resolving prejudices and differences amongst themselves. Laws such as the Equalities Act merely make matters worse: "those who attempt to resolve everything by law will exacerbate not cure the evils of mankind" (Spinoza).

The BBC would be given to those holding current TV licenses and would become responsible for funding itself. TV licensing would end.

The prison population would be evaluated. Convicted thieves would be offered release if they agreed to reimburse and compensate their victims. They would also be required to swear in public that they will never steal again. Similar offers would be made to other categories of prisoner.

Conjugal visits would be allowed – except for those convicted of rape.

Foreign Affairs

A CORE government would take Britain out of the European Union. The vast majority of the people forming that union have submitted to dictatorial government in the recent past. During their periods of tutelage, they inevitably acquired habits of obedience towards central authority. It is therefore vital for the future freedom of these islands not to saddle ourselves with treaty obligations over which we have little or no control. Nor can we be expected to abide by a treaty signed by a non-elected Prime Minister, whose signature never had any legal validity. 'Brexit' is the only option.

An Omnibus Bill would eliminate any law or regulation derived from anti-democratic European 'directives'.

While withdrawing from the EU, a CORE government would nonetheless do everything in its power to steer Europeans back to the original format and intent of the EEC, that is, to become a free trade area.

A CORE government would withdraw diplomatic recognition and close embassies in all countries in the hands of dictators, or where elections have been 'fixed', arranging with neutral countries such as Switzerland to look after any British citizens foolish enough to travel to places like Belarus, Iran, Cuba, etc, etc.

A CORE government would initiate legal proceedings in the International Court against the government of Sri Lanka on charges of genocide against the Tamil population in the north of that country. All sporting contacts with Sri Lanka would be discouraged until those responsible were brought to justice, right down to the individual squaddies, artillerymen and pilots who murdered so many prisoners, women, children and old people in cold blood.

Diplomatic relations would be suspended with Russia until those suspected of murdering Alexander Litvinenko were handed over for trial in London.

A suit would be launched in the International Court for compensation from Russia for the shooting down of a Malaysian civilian airliner by Russian troops in Eastern Ukraine.

Diplomatic relations with China would be suspended until those responsible for the Tiananmen Square massacre were brought to trial. If necessary, a case would be lodged on behalf of Chinese refugees in the International Court.

A similar case would be brought on behalf of the people of Tibet, so long oppressed by the Chinese invaders of their country.

An agreement to do away with passports will be sought with all countries with which Britain has full diplomatic relations. The passport agency would be privatised.

Business enterprises owned or controlled by foreign states would not be allowed to obtain a controlling interest in any British company or business. Those currently doing so would be required to divest themselves of any shareholding over 49%.

The current extradition treaty with the United States would be confined to purely terrorist offences and would be amended to make clear that it cannot be used for alleged offences of an ordinary civilian nature, or for offences which occurred in Britain. The bringers of such suits would have to prove to a British judge and jury that there was a case to answer.

The European common arrest warrant would no longer apply in Britain. Foreign governments seeking the arrest of a British subject or resident would be required to prove their case in a British court prior to any extradition and, should extradition be granted, to demonstrate that the accused would be tried immediately, not held in detention pending trial.

Visitors to Britain would be required to demonstrate that they had valid travellers' insurance covering all adverse eventualities for the full length of their stay.

State foreign aid would cease. Those wishing to help the less fortunate overseas would be free to do so, but they would have to implement their generosity through private charities. As already stated, for an act to be good it must be voluntary. Politicians attempting to gain kudos by giving away taxpayers' money destroys the whole concept of benevolence.

All British registered ships will be authorised to carry armed men, or to have sailors trained in the use of appropriate weaponry. 'Shoot first and ask questions afterwards' should be adopted as the official policy for ships passing through waters where pirates operate. Britain will ask other maritime countries to join us in taking offensive action against pirate bases.

Punitive fees for registering ships as British, and excessive regulation of shipping, would end.

Negotiations would begin immediately to bring about some form of reunion of Ireland with the rest of the British Isles, and a reunion of Northern Ireland and Eire. A prerequisite of any such reunion, however, would be the elimination of certain features of the Irish constitution, such as the ban on divorce.

As an inducement to reunion, and as proof that any historical conflicts or wrongdoings by either country had been laid aside, it would be proposed that the national debt of the Irish State be amalgamated with that of Great Britain and paid off jointly.

Great Britain would cooperate fully with other free countries, and help fund, any and all initiatives to combat international terrorism, cyber crime, jihadism, etc.

Defence

War is the end of reason. Even though it is often the occasion for great bravery and heroism, it is the most anti-human of all activities. Sometimes, alas, it is necessary for self-defence, but it should always be absolutely the last resort.

The main purpose of Parliament in future would be deciding the level of threat to the British Isles and hence the amount necessary to spend on defence.

All men between the ages of sixteen and sixty, and such women as chose to be involved, would be regarded as members of the Territorial Army. However, conscription would be permanently outlawed. Military training would be entirely voluntary and would be encouraged according to the perceived level of threat.

GCHQ would become a purely military establishment run by the three services jointly. It would be broken down into its component parts and distributed around Great Britain. Surely no country ever set up a more tempting target for potential enemies than the present GCHQ. The existing site would be sold for redevelopment, the proceeds paying for the relocations.

A portion of the monies saved from scrapping the Welfare State would be devoted to expanding and improving the defences of the British Isles. Eire would be invited to join in a programme of common defence.

Private security companies would be free to establish defence industries and cadres of armed men, perhaps with a view to selling their services to Parliament, or to countries overseas.

Old-established regiments with long histories of expertise in arms, such as the SAS or SBS, would be ideal candidates for transformation into security companies offering high quality services on long-term contracts. An outfit called Black Watch Security, say, would surely command immediate respect, although it could only retain its reputation by being superlative in its field.

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Concluding Notes

The draft manifesto of The Confederation & Reform Party has been prepared by one person. Were CORE to be launched, its members would naturally decide which policies to concentrate on, which to add, and which to postpone or drop. All involved should bear in mind that:

“The best way to show that these things can be done is to do them.”
(David Friedman)

This pamphlet, *Return to Freedom*, is based on the book *Fed Up With Government? Find out about the Reform Party*, published by Nicholas Dykes in 1991. Unfortunately, the author became permanently ill shortly after publication and the project had to be abandoned.

A comprehensive elaboration of the ideas behind *Return to Freedom* can be found in *Old Nick's Guide to Happiness: A Philosophical Novel*, published by Nicholas Dykes in 2008. Copies of either book, and of this pamphlet, can be obtained by sending a postal order or certified cheque, and postal details, to the address below.

Return to Freedom £1.75
Fed Up With Government? £3.95
Old Nick's Guide to Happiness £8.95
(Prices include postage and packaging)

Old Nick's Guide to Happiness is also available in two volumes on Kindle, or as a quality paperback from Amazon.

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(To be decided)