



EMBARGOED UNTIL 9.30AM Wednesday 3rd March 2010

A Liberal Democrat View of Race Equality

Leading Liberal Democrat Lynne Featherstone MP has today outlined her vision of how to tackle race inequality in the UK. In a paper published by the Runnymede Trust, Featherstone criticizes the Government for poor management of the Equality and Human Rights Commission and calls for “Representative Action” to tackle discrimination.

The Liberal Democrat Equalities Spokesperson also challenges the Government to tackle the over-representation of the black population on the DNA database and the disproportionate number of black men stopped and searched by the police.

In the context of the rise of the far-right, Featherstone argues that since 9/11 a “culture of fear” has been created around the Muslim community which has been exploited by the BNP.

To help tackle inequality, Featherstone calls for the introduction of a “name blank” application policy to remove bias in the process of deciding job applications. She also calls for those discriminated against to be represented as a group by trade unions or the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Today’s paper includes critiques by academics Dr Clare Alexander and Dr Harry Goulbourne, and is the second in a series of essays to be written by senior politicians on race equality as part of the “Runnymede Platform” series. A paper by Conservative front bencher Dominic Grieve QC MP on Conservatism and community cohesion was published in January, and essays by senior Labour and SNP politicians will be published shortly.

Commenting on her paper, Lynne Featherstone said: “Equality is of paramount importance and I welcome the opportunity of launching ‘Race, Equality and the Liberal Democrats’. I would like to thank Runnymede Trust for providing this opportunity.”

Commenting on the Runnymede Platform series Rob Berkeley, Director of Runnymede, said “Public debate about race equality is highly political but too often provides more heat than light. This series gives serious politicians an

opportunity to present their views on delivering race equality and tackling racism in a way that the importance of these questions warrants”.

Notes to Editors

- 1) The paper will be launched at an event on 3rd March between 8.30am and 9.30am in the House of Commons. If members of the press would like to attend please email vicki@runnymedetrust.org. Preview copies of the paper will be sent to journalists on 2nd March 2010.
- 2) Runnymede is an independent policy research organization focusing on equality and justice through the promotion of a successful multi-ethnic society. Founded as a Charitable Educational Trust, Runnymede has a long track record in policy research, working in close collaboration with eminent thinkers and policy makers in the public, private and voluntary sectors. Since 1968, the date of Runnymede’s foundation, it has worked to establish and maintain a positive image of what it means to live affirmatively within a society that is both multi-ethnic and culturally diverse. Runnymede continues to speak with a thoughtful and independent public voice on these issues today.
- 3) Runnymede Platform aims to create a space in which senior political figures can discuss issues of race equality, with critical comment from the academic community. Today’s paper is the second in the series following the publication of “Conservatism and Community Cohesion” by senior Conservative Dominic Grieve QC MP. Essays by the Labour Party and the SNP will be published shortly.