

CHAPTER 1

THE GREEN PARTY: GOVERNING FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Imagine a world of efficient and welcoming public services, coordinated action on climate change, equality, workers' rights, an economy that works for people and planet at a human scale, restorative justice, and real care for the future, including young people now.

Imagine a world in which we protect the planet, its land and its oceans, and the plants, animals and people that live on it.

Imagine a world of security for all, of social security as opportunity not dependency, of lives lived more locally, with services close to where people need them and connected by affordable, energy-efficient public transport.

Imagine a government that believes in society, in our common humanity, in a culture of hope, and in our capacity to govern ourselves. Imagine a government that believes in the common good, and that the best way of achieving it is by working for each other, rather than against each other. Imagine honest government.

That's the world the Green Party wants to make real. It's also the world that most of us want. When asked to vote for policies rather than parties or personalities, Green policies consistently come out on top.

And it's so different from what we have now. In consumer societies like ours, the common good has been forgotten. So much government has been outsourced, put out to tender. The reins have been handed over to the unfettered market and big corporations. They are given as the reason why we can't do things (such as bring the railways back into public ownership), why we must do things (lower taxes for the rich) and how we must do things (privatise public utilities). When government has been active it's been to make the rich richer and the poor poorer, while blocking action to prevent ecological catastrophe. This has had disastrous consequences for the common good and for the protection of the natural world.

Back in the 1970s a determined assault on public life began, and the market became the model and measure of life. Since then, successive governments of all colours have found ways to justify and deepen the role of the market in our lives.

- *Local government?* Check out your nearest website or leaflet: you're likely to be referred to as a customer, not a citizen.
- *Privatisation?* Look at one of the most recent – Royal Mail. This was owned by you and me, then it was sold for a song, with windfall profits for companies doing the only job the market really understands – maximising shareholder profit. The public lost £1 billion, while George Osborne's best man's hedge fund pocketed £36 million.
- *Outsourcing?* This is what governments do when they've given up governing. The result is a series of scandals from companies with increasingly infamous names – G4S, SERCO, ATOS – over which we have no control.
- *Zero-hours contracts?* These are designed for companies looking to maximise profits through labour flexibility, but hopeless if you have regular bills to pay.