

## Document 10.†

### **“Nick Clegg: How Margaret Thatcher Inspires Me”**

*Nick Clegg, the Liberal Democrat leader, has spoken of his admiration for Baroness Thatcher and her Conservative government.*

By James Kirkup, Political Correspondent (5:39PM GMT 10 Mar 2010)

*The Telegraph:* <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics...Nick-Clegg-how-Margaret-Thatcher-inspires-me.html>

In an attempt to appeal to Tory voters, Mr Clegg said that his party’s economic policies are more representative of Thatcherite free-market principles than those of David Cameron.

Many of Britain’s current economic problems, Mr Clegg said, could be explained by a failure to enact the pro-competition policies put forward by Lady Thatcher.

He also said his party’s tax policies were similar to those of Lord Lawson, the Conservative chancellor during the 1980s. The Lib Dem plan to raise the starting threshold for income tax to £10,000 is a “Lawson policy”, Mr Clegg said.

Mr Clegg’s praise for Conservative figures may fuel speculation that he would be prepared to co-operate with the Tories in the event of a hung parliament after the election.

In an interview with *The Spectator* magazine, Mr Clegg said that he had campaigned against many of Lady Thatcher’s policies during the 1980s. But, he said, he now realised that she had been right about many things.

‘I’m 43 now. I was at university at the height of the Thatcher revolution and I recognise now something I did not at the time: that her victory over a vested interest, the trade unions, was immensely significant. I don’t want to be churlish: that was an immensely important visceral battle for how Britain is governed.

He added: “And what has now happened to the British economy? It has gone belly-up because, once again, we have allowed a vested interest to run riot.”

That “vested interest” is the banking sector, Mr Clegg said.

Mr Clegg said that Mr Cameron, the Tory leader, and George Osborne, the shadow chancellor, were unwilling to tackle the “vested interest” of the bankers.

He said: “A real liberal believes in genuine competition, a genuine level playing field and he is unremittingly hostile to vested interests.”

The Lib Dems are facing a strong challenge from the Conservatives at the general election. Tory strategists believe they can capture more than ten parliamentary seats currently held by Lib Dem MPs, most of them in the south and south-west of England.