**On Liberty** was part of a Liberal shift to supporting public spending and political reform.

The Whigs saw this as ousting a despotic King to ensure Parliament was supreme. It created their political tradition of opposing absolute power and supporting religious toleration. From this later came support for the Rule of Law and equality before the law.

**Willis Rooms Meeting**
Whigs, radicals and peelites (followers of the former Conservative PM) met in London and combined to form the Liberal Party.

**The Merger**
SDP (formed mainly by ex-Labour figures) and Liberal Party merged to form the Liberal Democrats.

**Social & Economic Liberals**
Many see Social Liberals vs Economic Liberals as the party’s biggest ideological divide today, although with numerous beliefs in common, many members say they are both.

**Social Liberals**
Tend to be most concerned about inequality and promote democracy to give people more power.

**Economic Liberals**
Tend to be most concerned about an overbearing state and promote free markets to give people more power.

**Centre Party or Not?**
Some see the party as being in the centre on a left/right spectrum, with Labour and Tories at each end of it.

Others reject this spectrum, and instead see the party at the liberal end of a liberal/authoritarian spectrum, with both Labour and Tories at the other end of it.

**The Economic Dilemma**

**Putting New Ideas on the Agenda**
Over the years the party has been central to popularising some previously fringe beliefs which then became mainstream - especially Civil Liberties, Pro-Europeanism, Environmentalism and constitutional reform.

Most famously, Harry Willcock triggered the abolition of ID cards with an act of civil disobedience in 1950.

**The Harm Principle**
“The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.”

John Stuart Mill & Harriet Taylor in On Liberty

**Peace, Retrenchment and Reform**
William Gladstone’s popular trio meant peace overseas, economy in public spending and political reform.

**We Can Conquer Unemployment**
David Lloyd George’s famous slogan was part of a Liberal shift to supporting greater public spending to help the economy and fund a welfare state.

**Community Politics Developed**
A growing emphasis on winning local elections and pavement politics led to a new political theory about helping people secure power over their own lives.

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