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Dear Mrs Rumbold,

Thank you for your letter of 10 May about censorship. Although glad to find you so vehement in opposing it I must say that I am rather surprised in view of your past voting pattern when the subject has come up in the House. I note that you ignored the gravamen of my letter. It really is extraordinarily difficult, indeed it has so far proved impossible, to find any government minister who will say that it is wrong for people to call openly for their fellow-citizens to be murdered. I cannot decide whether this says more about the individuals than it does about the government as a whole.

Thank you also for your letter of 13 May about clause 29 of the Criminal Justice Bill. You will probably not be surprised to learn that I find your attempted explanation lacking in integrity. Last Tuesday evening I saw on television a programme on the sexual harassment carried out in this country by bigoted homophobes, skinheads, National Front supporters, racialists, and members (high and low) of Her Majesty's constabulary. They are, of course, merely reacting to the signals being sent out by the government. Our record of treatment of the homosexual community is by far the worst in Europe - Adolf Hitler would have been proud of the subtle way we pretend to be a free and liberal society while in reality we carry out a vicious persecution of one of the largest minorities among us. The beating-up of homosexuals is looked upon by the police as even less important than Paki-bashing, judging by the results of police investigations into reported cases. And I find it iniquitous that the killing of individuals simply because they have minority tastes is apparently accepted as a valid expression of opinion.

You say that the purpose of clause 29 is "simply to ensure that the Courts have sufficient powers to protect the public from those offenders who are likely to commit serious sexual offences such as rape." It is, in fact, a strong hint to the judiciary (who are as a body inclined to be homophobic, reactionary and illiberal - the method of selecting them ensures that they are unlikely to represent a cross-section of society or to understand fully the backgrounds and attitudes of many of the victims brought before them) that the government wants harsher sentencing of so-called criminals whose offences may be nothing more heinous than kissing in public. This applies only to men, of course. Lesbians are allowed to kiss each other openly; this is a residual benefit of the ignorance of Queen Victoria who refused to believe that Lesbianism existed. I find it hard to believe that even the most die-hard queer-basher in the House really thinks that two men who happen to display affection for each other in public should therefore be sent to prison - and sent to prison they will be if clause 29 goes through. The suggestion that sections 13 and 32 will be used is a nonsense; when the police and the other queer-bashers get the chance of using a bludgeon instead of a cane they will jump at the chance.

You do not say which cases now dealt with under sections 13 or 32 can be "of a more serious nature". Trying to guess what you have in mind, I suggest that any such case would not have been dealt with under either of these sections. Instead the 1956 Act or the 1960 Indecency with Children Act would have been invoked. You may not consider that any further amendment is either necessary or desirable, but the provisions relating to sections 13 and 32 are as bogus as were the provisions now deleted concerning sections of the Sexual Offences Act of 1967. The retained references serve only to maintain prejudice in law - specifically against "gay" men (who have in this country less protection from the legal system than they have anywhere else in Europe, in fact the legal system is stacked against them).

I heartily agree that there is a case for reforming the substantive law on sexual offences. This could have been done in the Criminal Justice Bill.

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But whereas my view is that the government should at long last start to decriminalise many men and women who fall foul of our vicious, vindictive and illiberal laws, so that we begin to come into line with our EEC partners, the government's view is that we need even more harsh legislation based on prejudice and proliferation of lying myths. It is not long since a member of the House was uttering a tirade of abuse against the wicked homosexuals who were addicted to abusing children. To listen to her one would never have known that according to police records only about 2% of crimes against children are committed by homosexuals. It is the heterosexuals, the upright, clean-living citizens of legend, who do the abusing. But just as the Yids are responsible for all the frauds in the City and the niggers are responsible for the inner-city decay (and for jumping all the housing lists - what lists are left now), so the poofs are responsible for all the sexual abuse of young children. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. Give a minority a degrading name and then blame it for some unpleasant aspect of our society.

Some years ago I used to oppose our entry into the EEC. During the past decade I have come to welcome it as perhaps the only guarantee left of real freedom for the individual - the freedom that is whittled away by such legislation now being steam-rollered through Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

D. Roberts

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