

Wilson J (Jim)

From:**Sent:** 23 October 2008 16:01**To:** Criminal Justice and Licensing Bill**Subject:** Extreme pronogarchy legislation

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Dear Mr. Wilson,

Thank you for passing on my email regarding the extreme pornography section of the new CJIL. I still haven't heard back from Ms. Oakley about the connection between organised crime and extreme pornography, but I would still like you to pass on this email to the relevant people.

On Tuesday 21st October, Ben Westwood led a demonstration organised by the Consenting Adults Action Network (CAAN) in front of Westminster to protest the anti-pornography legislation in the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act. During the demonstration, Westwood led a group of models and activists tied up and gagged in a chain gang as they carried placards reading "1984 is NOW!", "NO to Thought Crime", and "Labour Puritans OUT OUT OUT". Some photographs of the demonstration can be seen here: <http://newstog.webng.com/Ben%20Westwood%20Caan/> The protest was covered by various members of the press, including the BBC (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7682319.stm).

The best article I've seen talking about CAAN and Westwood's chain gang protest is on the Heresy Corner Blog: <http://heresycorner.blogspot.com/2008/10/going-to-extremes.html> The author quite clearly outlines many of the fears people have of this bill. Most notably, I'd like to point out the penultimate paragraph, blaming New Labour for this rise in "thought police"-style crime. Does the SNP really want to be so aligned with Labour?

Another article worth pointing out to you is in The Times Online by Ruth Gledhill. <http://timescolumns.typepad.com/gledhill/2008/10/its-the-yuk-fac.html#more> While the article itself consists of little more than the official CAAN press release, the comments below are worth reading. The majority of the comments support the bill, arguing that freedom should exist in the bedroom, that the religious right is stifling sexual minorities, that the law demolishes privacy and ignores the right of consent, and so on.

The comments condemning the protest are far more interesting, however. Simply because it was known that the demonstration was in response to a law banning extreme pornography, people assumed that the protesters were going to have sex in the streets. As you can see from the pictures linked above, that didn't happen, and if you read the press release in Gledhill's article it public sex was never mentioned. Other people claimed the whole concept was a mockery of historical slavery, a point soundly beaten by other commentators. Both of these comments show a fear and ignorance of alternative sexualities, and more alarmingly, the imagination to make things seem worse than they really are. The jump from "chain gang of slaves" to "public sex" occurred solely in the minds of the readers; Few, if any, BDSM practitioners will say they have anything to do with historical slavery and the owning of people. While it is all well and fine for the public to be misinformed and ignorant of an entire lifestyle, there is no excuse for lawmakers to be equally reactionary and fearful.

Perhaps the best opinion on the matter came from "M" in response to Gledhill's article: "If people didn't want this protest, then the Government shouldn't have passed this law criminalising them." Echoed by Mark, "The only reason people are protesting is because of the law that's about to criminalise consenting adults. If you want them to go away, then we should get rid of this law!"

The campaign against the law in England is not over, and neither is it over here in Scotland either. Perhaps it would be best to begin thinking about ways to remove the section quietly? If we continue to publicise it, it will only be harder to remove it later.

23/02/2009

Oh, and I am still curious about Kenny MacAskill's claims about a link between extreme pornography and organised crime. Please get back to me on that one.

Sincerely,

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