

Our work in Northern Ireland

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Dear Supporter,

The past few months have been busy for The Christian Institute in Northern Ireland. We have campaigned against attempts to lower the age of consent for sexual activity, and attempts to extend abortion here through the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill.

Over the last year The Christian Institute has spoken at 96 meetings in churches across the Province. It has been encouraging to see many believers taking seriously the call to pray for those in government (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Thank you for your support for The Christian Institute. Please continue to pray for us in our work.

Yours in Christ,



Callum Webster
Northern Ireland Officer



MPs fail to impose abortion on NI

An attempt to use the controversial embryos Bill to get Great Britain's abortion law extended to Northern Ireland has failed.

Six MPs, none of whom represented Northern Irish constituencies, tabled an amendment in July which

would have allowed unborn babies in the Province to be aborted up to 24 weeks' gestation, as is the case on the mainland.

We asked supporters to write and pray urgently against the amendment, which was opposed by all four major parties in the Province.

Concerned by the level of opposition, the Government put pressure on the pro-abortion MPs to withdraw the Northern Ireland amendment but they refused. In the final

House of Commons debate the Government used a procedural measure to ensure that all votes on abortion went to the back of the queue. In the end, the abortion amendments never reached a vote and so failed.

Christian prayers and letter-writing played a key role in this result.

Currently, the Abortion Act 1967 does not apply in Northern Ireland, where abortion remains illegal unless the mother's life would be threatened by continuing the pregnancy.

PSNI's elastic definition of 'hate crimes' in Co.Down

The PSNI in County Down has partnered with a gay rights group to tackle homophobia and transphobia.

Under the scheme 20,000 information leaflets will be produced and a mobile phone text service established to encourage the

reporting of hate crime.¹

The PSNI says it will record "any incident perceived to have been committed ... on the grounds of a particular person's ... sexual orientation, [or] gender identity ... whether it amounts to a crime or not. These incidents are

commonly referred to as hate crimes".²

By this description something can be logged as a hate crime, without a crime ever taking place! Such a loose definition leaves huge scope for bogus hate crimes to be recorded.

It is becoming a

routine tactic for gay rights activists to call the police whenever someone disagrees with them publicly.

¹ *News Letter*, 12 March 2008

² See: http://www.psni.police.uk/index/hate_crimes.htm, as at 19 November 2008

Age of consent reduced, but other proposals shelved

The Government has overridden public concerns and lowered the age of consent for sex in Northern Ireland to 16 years.

This move undermines democracy given the findings of a recent opinion poll which showed that 73% of people in Northern Ireland, including 80% of Protestants and 72% of Roman Catholics, were opposed to lowering the age of consent.¹

The largest young people's organisations in the Province – the Boys Brigade and the Girls Brigade – also publicly opposed the change.²

The move was strongly resisted by locally elected politicians. Some 57 MLAs from across the political spectrum signed a No Day Named Motion calling on the Government not to proceed with this change.

Danny Kennedy of the UUP said: "the age of consent exists to protect our young people from exploitation, and that protection must not be weakened".³

Pat Ramsey of the SDLP warned that: "young people are pressured into having sex long before they are ... ready ... all of us see the consequences of unplanned pregnancy, STDs and



Problems connected with teenage sex are worse on the mainland where the age of consent is 16 (image for illustrative purposes only)

loss of self respect".⁴

Jim Wells of the DUP pointed out that: "to lower the age of consent is to give a further 26,000 children the green light to become involved in sexual activity".⁵

The key advocates of a lower age of consent were the

children's rights groups NSPCC and Barnardo's.⁶

While the lowering of the age of consent is disappointing, it is worth remembering that other proposals were not pursued. These included allowing children aged 13 or above to legally have sex with anyone up to 3 years older than them.⁷

There were also proposals to legalise brothels for two or three prostitutes and to weaken laws which specifically prohibit sex in public lavatories.

The Institute alerted Christians to these matters and submitted evidence in opposition to the plans.

None of these additional proposals were implemented; the Government only chose to reduce the age of consent from 17 to 16.

This shows the impact that Christians can have.

¹ *News Letter*, 7 April 2008

² *Loc cit*

³ *Loc cit*

⁴ SDLP press release, 17 April 2008

⁵ Northern Ireland Assembly, Hansard, 4 February 2008

⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, 1 May 2008

⁷ *Reforming the Law on Sexual Offences in Northern Ireland: A Consultative Document*, Volume 2, Northern Ireland Office, July 2006

£1 million of public money to gay groups

Taxpayers have been funding homosexual groups in Northern Ireland to the tune of £1 million in recent years.

During the past five years the Department of Education awarded grants of £333,734 to groups working with homosexuals.¹ The Department of Health gave funding of £329,767 to gay and lesbian organisations during the same period.²

From 2003 to October 2007 OFMDM gave £107,822 to homosexual groups³ and a further funding package of £230,000 was agreed for the financial years 2007/08 and 2008/09.⁴

The Northern Ireland Events Company gave £9,110 to the gay pride festivals in Belfast in 2006 and 2007. Meanwhile the Arts Council gave funding of £17,500 to Cara Friend and Queer Space.⁵

¹ NI Assembly, Written Answers to Questions, 16 November 2007, [AQW 1513/08]

² *Ibid*, 16 November 2007, [AQW 1510/08]

³ NI Assembly, Written Answers to Questions, 23 November 2007, [AQW 1512/08]

⁴ NI Assembly, Written Answers to Questions, 11 January 2008, [AQW 2136/08] and [AQW 2138/08]

⁵ NI Assembly, Written Answers to Questions, 23 November 2007, [AQW 1511/08]

Transsexual rights directive forced by European Union

An EU Gender Directive has been imposed on Northern Ireland despite opposition. This Directive outlaws discrimination in the provision of goods and services on grounds of gender reassignment (transsexualism).

The former First Minister, Dr Ian Paisley, refused to legislate for the Directive while it included gender reassignment, but Westminster then implemented it on a UK-wide basis.¹

Religious exemptions are included, covering church activities. The Christian Institute has been aware of cases in recent years of transsexuals pressing to teach in Sunday schools, sing in church choirs, and even trying to sue churches.



Bill Parry, also known as “Dian”, tried to sue a church in 2002 because it refused him access to the female toilets and ladies’ prayer meeting.

¹ NI Assembly, Written Answers to Questions, 1 February 2008, [AQW 2922/08]

A biblical view of transsexualism

Transsexuals are men or women with a biologically normal body who believe themselves to be members of the opposite sex.

The feeling of being ‘trapped in the wrong body’ may lead to a person demanding gender reassignment, with hormone therapy and surgery to change their physical appearance. But the problem is psychological and cannot be solved by a mutilating operation.

The Bible teaches that God created people as either male or female (Genesis 1:27). 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 warns against sinning sexually against one’s body. Deuteronomy 22:5 forbids men to dress as, or take on the appearance of, women.

Some people confuse transsexualism with rare

biological conditions such as hermaphroditism, where people are born with both ovaries and testicles. These illnesses have nothing to do with transsexualism. A transsexual has a healthy, biologically normal body.

Evidence shows that many transsexuals later regret having reassignment surgery. Some attempt suicide, while others return to their biological sex.¹

The Christian response to transsexualism should be care and counsel to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21).

¹ *Report of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Transsexual People*, Home Office, April 2000, para 5.1, page 25; *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, American Psychiatric Association, 1987, page 75

Irish League football matches kick off on Sundays

The first Irish League football matches to take place on Sundays were played this summer. On Sunday 7 September Glentoran played Bangor at the Oval and on Sunday 28 September Donegal Celtic faced Sport and Leisure Swifts at Suffolk Road.

Last November the Irish Football Association overturned

its historic ban on Sunday matches. IFA chief executive Howard Wells welcomed the move as bringing freedom of choice.¹

Following the IFA's lead, Linfield Football Club recently amended its rules to allow matches to be played at Windsor Park on Sundays.²

Local churches have pointed out that

freedom of choice will not be extended to everyone. Playing competitive matches on the Lord's Day will put pressure on Christian footballers and club staff to compromise their faith or be left out in the long term.

Also, people living near football grounds will have their peaceful Sunday afternoons disturbed by noise and traffic. Surely these residents are entitled to a day of rest?

¹ *News Letter*, 29 November 2007

² *Belfast Telegraph*, 6 May 2008





About our work in Northern Ireland

About us

The Christian Institute is a UK registered charity that exists to promote the Christian faith in the public arena. We produce publications and briefing materials on issues such as marriage and the family, abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, and drugs. The Institute presents a Christian perspective on these and other issues, to Government, public bodies and the media. We work with Christians who have been discriminated against because of their Christian beliefs. The Institute also informs Christians of key issues in contemporary society. We hold public lectures and meetings in churches.

Support us

Employing staff, running an office and a website, producing newsletters and publications, campaigning on parliamentary issues, and holding meetings in churches is costly. We have regular bills to pay. The Institute welcomes one-off donations, but we also need regular giving to ensure a predictable income. If you wish to support us with a regular giving pledge, then please contact us on (028) 9046 1536, or go to our website: christian.org.uk/support

 (028) 9046 1536
 christian.org.uk

Meet us

Over the past year The Christian Institute has spoken at 96 meetings in various churches across Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Officer travelled over 7,500 miles to and from these events. These meetings were attended by over 4,800 people. The Institute works hard to ensure that its presentations are informative and professional. If you would like The Christian Institute to speak at a meeting in your church, please contact Callum Webster on (028) 9046 1536 or email callum.webster@christian.org.uk. We cannot guarantee to accept every invitation, but each one will be carefully considered.



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