

Scottish Update

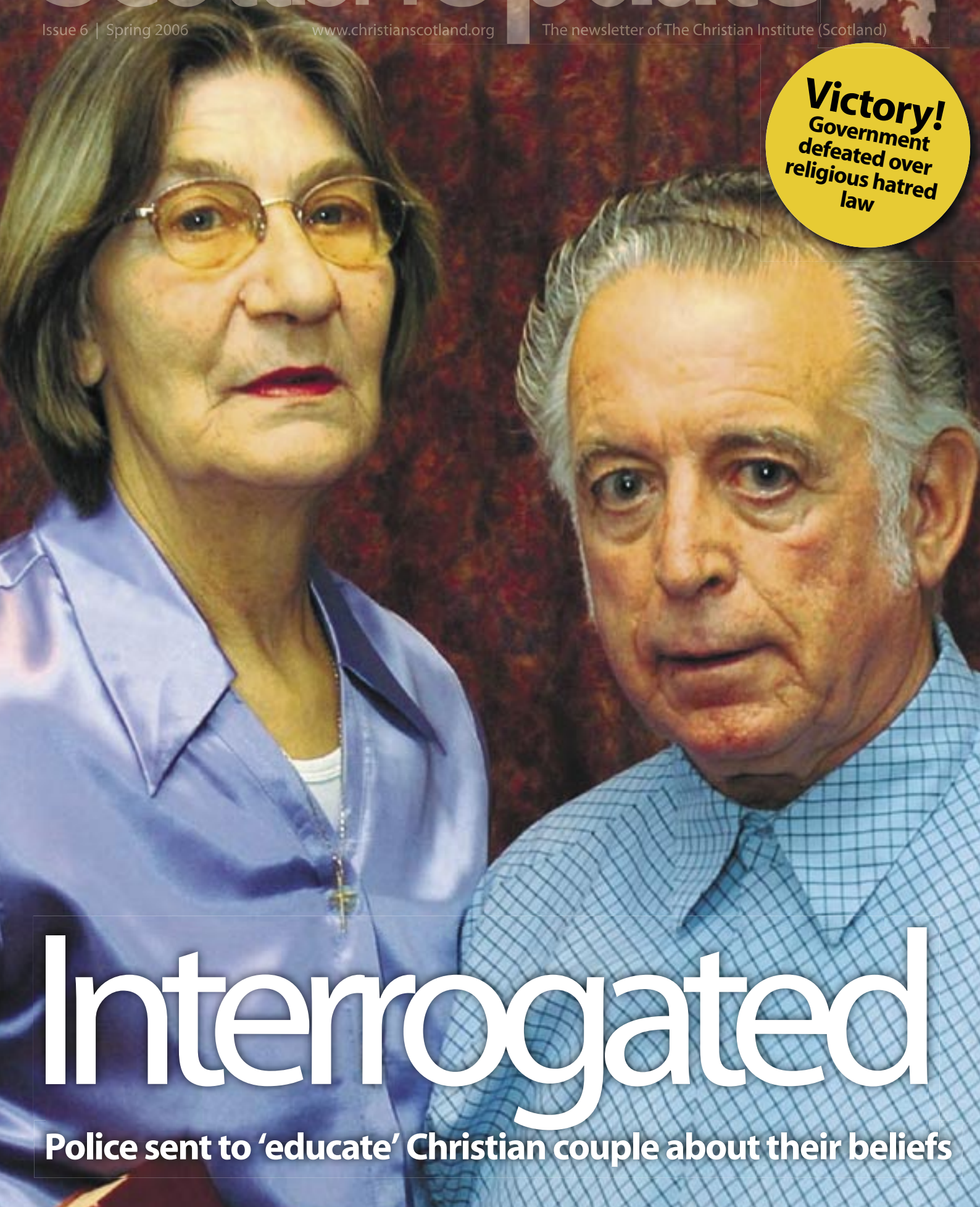


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The newsletter of The Christian Institute (Scotland)

Victory!
Government
defeated over
religious hatred
law



Interrogated

Police sent to 'educate' Christian couple about their beliefs

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“ A retired Christian couple were subjected to an 80-minute interrogation by police after they complained to their local council about its 'gay rights' policies.

Joe and Helen Roberts, of Fleetwood near Blackpool in Lancashire, also asked to place Christian literature next to gay rights brochures in public buildings, but were refused because it may have offended homosexuals... ”



The Christian Institute, PO Box 23282, Edinburgh, EH1 2XU
 Tel 0131 226 3555 Fax 0131 226 3888
 info@christian.org.uk www.christianscotland.org

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The price of freedom is eternal vigilance

As I write this, the Government's defeat over its religious hatred plans is still fresh in my mind. I know that countless thousands of Christians rejoiced and gave thanks to God as the result was announced. The key vote was won by a majority of only one MP. It was a nail biting victory, and a vital one.

The law proposed by the Government put Gospel freedom in jeopardy. Our freedoms would not have been taken away overnight, but the grave danger was that our religious liberty would have been steadily eroded case by case.

The House of Lords was a voice of reason, as it has been so many times before. Peers were rightly concerned that the planned offence was too broadly worded. They deleted the most troublesome parts of the offence. They said only 'threatening' words or behaviour should be caught, rather than 'threatening or abusive or insulting'. They also said intention to stir up religious hatred must be proved, rather than including a 'likely' test.

The House of Lords also introduced a sweeping free speech defence that protects "discussion, criticism or expressions of antipathy, dislike, ridicule, insult or abuse of particular religions or the beliefs or practices of their adherents, or of any other belief system or the beliefs or practices of its adherents, or proselytising or urging adherents of a different religion or belief system to cease practising their religion or belief system". That's pretty comprehensive.

The Government resisted these changes, saying that under the Lords' wording prosecutions would be virtually impossible to secure. The Government grossly underestimated the strength of feeling amongst MPs on this issue.

And MPs felt very strongly. Throughout the debate speech after speech tore into the flimsy arguments of Government Minister, Paul Goggins. And criticism came not only from opposition benches. Backbenchers from his own party demolished his fragile reassurances that freedom of speech was safe in the Government's hands.

I have no doubt that the repeated arguments of Christians to MPs about this issue were decisive in convincing so many to vote for the Lords' safeguards. Although secular groups were also opposed to the offence, anyone who listened to the debate would have noticed the influence of Christian constituents.

Many MPs made reference to letters they had received. As MPs debated the offence, hundreds of Christians gathered outside Parliament in a peaceful protest. In the end, victory was secured. It took hard work. It took tenacity. It took faithful prayer and action.

Most of all, this is God's victory. It is to Him that we give thanks.

As a nation we do not deserve this mercy. The church has been too quiet for too long about such issues. We have been delivered from the potential harm of this offence.

Let us renew our determination to use this precious liberty. Where we were once too quiet, let us now boldly proclaim the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and let us confidently warn people against false religion and immorality.

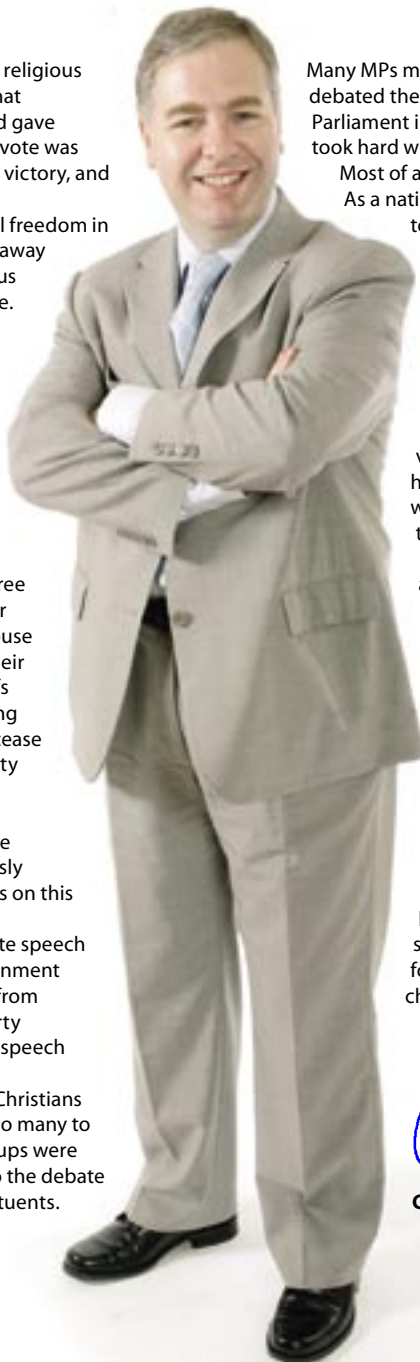
While it is right that we rejoice in this victory, we must remain ever watchful. The price of liberty is eternal vigilance. Gay rights groups say now there's a religious hatred law, they want a 'homophobic hatred' law. Even without such a law there are already problems. It seems to be a routine tactic for gay rights protestors to call in the police and complain about 'homophobia' whenever anyone disagrees with them. This happened to the Bishop of Chester, the journalist Lynnette Burrows, Sir Iqbal Sacranie, and Philip Jensen, Dean of Sydney Cathedral, who all spoke out on homosexuality. No law was broken.

On page 9 of this Update you can read about the disturbing case of Joe and Helen Roberts. The police were sent round to this Christian couple's home to 'educate' them because they complained to their local council about its gay rights policies. This is an outrageous case. The action of the police in this case has been roundly condemned in the national press.

The campaign against the religious hatred offence has shown us what we can do when we are prepared to stand up and be counted. We must continue to speak out for our liberty. If we don't stand firm today, what will our children face tomorrow?



Colin Hart, Director



Government overstates number of homosexuals

■ By Jonathan Phillips

The Government has ignored its own census results and adopted the 'gay numbers' hype of Britain's leading gay rights group.

In its analysis of the likely take-up of civil partnerships Whitehall is using the figure put forward by the gay lobby group, Stonewall, that between 5 and 7 per cent of the population is gay, lesbian or bisexual.¹ Significantly, Stonewall's grossly inflated estimate includes bisexuals, who by definition are not homosexual and so would not enter a civil partnership.

The largest and most statistically robust research into sexual behaviour ever carried out in the UK was the 1990 *Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles* survey. It flatly contradicts Stonewall's claims. The 1990 survey did indeed show that 5.5% of men had experienced same-sex

attraction, but far fewer (3.6%) had actually engaged in homosexual activity.²

Yet even for many of these it was a case of 'tried it once and not again'. In the words of the study: "It would, of course, be quite misleading to base any assumptions about homosexual behaviour in general on these figures, since the proportion reporting a same-sex partner includes a number of respondents for whom the experience was a single, possibly youthful and experimental, occurrence and for whom a homosexual inclination was not a lasting orientation."³ The survey found that only 0.3% of men were exclusively homosexual in their sexual practice.⁴

This is consistent with the results from the 2001 Census, the most comprehensive survey of the UK population, showing there are fewer

than 40,000 same-sex households in England and Wales, representing less than 0.2% of all households.⁵ Surely, if homosexual couples do not want to say they are a same-sex couple in the Census, they will not want a civil partnership?

In 2000 there was a follow up to the 1990 study. It found that 0.9% of men are exclusively attracted to the same sex.⁶ The 2000 study was much smaller than the 1990 study and considered a much narrower age range of 16-44 instead of 16-59. Researchers who ran the 2000 survey accept it is not statistically representative of the UK and that statistical bias alone could account for an increase in the reported prevalence of sexual behaviours.⁷ It is this much less reliable and unrepresentative study which Stonewall quotes, in addition to citing the notoriously inaccurate Kinsey report.

- ¹ *Final Regulatory Impact Assessment: Civil Partnership Act 2004*, Department of Trade and Industry, page 22, see <http://www.dti.gov.uk/access/ria/pdf/ria-civilpartnerships2004.pdf> as at 8 February 2006; and *Civil Partnership: A Framework for the Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Couples*, DTI Women & Equality Unit, June 2003, page 68
- ² Johnson A M, Wadsworth J, Wellings K et al, *Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles*, Blackwell, 1994, page 191 (results from face to face interviews)
- ³ *Ibid*, pages 212-213
- ⁴ *Ibid*, Table 7.8, page 209
- ⁵ *Census 2001: National Report for England and Wales Part 2*, ONS, 2004, Table UV93, page 70
- ⁶ Compared to 0.5% of men aged 16-44 in the 1990 study. Erens B, McManus S, Prescott A et al, *National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles II: Reference Tables and Summary Report*, National Centre for Social Research, 2003, Table 4.1, page 53
- ⁷ Copas A J, Wellings K, Erens B et al, 'The Accuracy of Reported Sensitive Sexual Behaviour in Britain: Exploring the Extent of Change 1990-2000', *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, 78, pages 26-30

Shakespeare, Nightingale and Newton were all homosexuals claims 'gay history month'

■ By Richard Sherratt

Schoolchildren as young as seven should be taught that Sir Isaac Newton, Florence Nightingale and William Shakespeare were homosexual, according to a 'gay rights' history project backed by the Scottish Executive.

Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) History Month spuriously lists these three well-known Britons as "famous LGBT" people, even though there is little evidence to back up the claims. Organisers say, "We include them here because we believe they had an experience of or interest in same-sex love."¹

In one lesson suggestion pupils are given a list of historical figures to research which includes Joan of Arc with the question "was Joan a trans man too?"²

LGBT History Month started last year and runs throughout the month of February. It was developed by a gay rights activists group called 'Schools Out'.

The project is supported by the Scottish Executive which has commissioned LGBT Youth

Scotland to co-ordinate it in coming years. The Executive has even organised a Ministerial Reception to support the project.³

Schools are not obliged to participate in the project and few are expected to do so. However, there have been anecdotal reports of some schools taking part.

When the initiative was launched last year it brought criticism from some MPs. The then Shadow Education Secretary, Tim Collins, said "It's all achingly politically correct. Surely there must be time and resources that could be spent on better things than this." He also voiced concern that children as young as seven could be taking part in events, saying it was important "to protect the innocence of children of that age".⁴

¹ http://www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk/history/images_famousLGBTpeople.htm as at 8 February 2006

² <http://www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk/documents/LessonPlan-GenderVariance.pdf> as at 8 February 2006

³ LGBT Youth Scotland, *LGBT History Month 2006 Media Information Pack*

⁴ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/4194247.stm> as at 8 February 2006



Sir Isaac Newton

Barclays Bank backs civil partnerships

■ By Alasdair Armour



Barclays Bank has sponsored a glossy leaflet supporting new civil partnerships.

In association with the gay rights group, Stonewall, the high street bank is encouraging homosexual couples to take advantage of new civil partnerships.

The leaflet, *Get Hitched!*, describes legal rights as well as showing images that are reminiscent of traditional heterosexual marriages.

It states that 'to all intents and purposes' civil partnerships are equivalent to marriage.¹

Barclays' involvement in such a highly controversial measure risks alienating its Christian customers. In 1999 Christians were outraged to discover that NatWest had supported Stonewall's tenth anniversary dinner. Many Christian customers threatened to close their accounts. The next year NatWest failed to sponsor the event.

Michael O'Toole, a spokesman for Barclays, said: "We want to position ourselves as the bank of choice for Britain's gay and lesbian community... There's more of a push going on now to enter this market of about 2.5 million adults."²

It appears the bank has fallen for the 'gay numbers hype'. The latest census results show fewer than 80,000 individuals living in same-sex households in England and Wales.³

¹ *Get Hitched! A Guide to Civil Partnerships*, Stonewall, 2005 point i

² *The Observer*, 11 December 2005

³ *Census 2001: National Report for England and Wales Part 2*, ONS, 2004, Table UV93, page 70

Low take-up for civil partnerships



■ By Jonathan Johnson

New laws establishing civil partnerships came into force last December. The first registrations took place later that month.

Civil partnerships give almost all the legal rights of marriage to same-sex couples that register. However, despite the hype and publicity at the time, it is expected that very few partnerships will be formed.

The Government has estimated that even under its 'high take

up scenario' only 3.3 per cent of homosexuals will actually register by the year 2050.

Even under the Government's pessimistic projection for future marriages, the rate of heterosexuals expected to marry will be ten times higher.

In other words, only 42,550 civil partnerships are expected to be formed by 2050¹ – fewer than 1,000 per year. This compares to 307,000 marriages each year (at present historically low levels).²

Critics say this shows that the new laws are more about an ideological attack on the institution of marriage, rather than any genuine need for the legal benefits provided by a civil partnership.

¹ *Final Regulatory Impact Assessment: Civil Partnership Act 2004*, Department of Trade and Industry, Table 17, page 35, see <http://www.dti.gov.uk/access/ria/pdf/ria-civilpartnerships2004.pdf> as at 8 February 2006

² This is the 2003 figure for the whole of the UK – see *Population Trends*, 122, Winter 2005, ONS, Table 2.1, page 59

Death threat after registrars in Western Isles refuse civil partnership celebrations

■ By Mike Judge

Registrars in the Western Isles do not want to conduct civil partnership ceremonies. The Western Isles Council has backed their decision.

The Council says it will fulfil its legal obligations to register partnerships, but will not be offering additional wedding-like ceremonies. The Scottish Executive said it may fly in registrars from the mainland to conduct ceremonies.¹

The Council has since received hate mail from around the world as a result of their decision. The emails included a death threat which said councillors should be hung from "the nearest tree".²

A Council spokesman told *The Daily Telegraph*, "We are complying with the law. We have used our powers of discretion. The law is slightly different for heterosexual couples, and that is why they have been treated differently. There is no requirement in a civil partnership to hold a ceremony."³

That has been confirmed by a legal opinion produced for The Christian Institute by leading lawyer, James Dingemans QC. He confirms that local registration authorities are not obliged to offer ceremonies to those registering a partnership under the Act.

Mr Dingemans also believes it would be unlawful to apply disciplinary proceedings against a registrar who refuses to register a civil partnership. He argues that this could break laws against religious discrimination in the workplace.

The Christian Institute has pointed out that doctors are allowed to refuse to perform abortions and teachers cannot be forced to attend school worship. It seems only fair that registrars who oppose civil partnerships on moral grounds should be allowed to refuse to conduct them.

¹ *The Scotsman*, 20 and 21 December 2005

² *The Daily Telegraph* (Scottish edition), 21 December 2005

³ *Loc cit*

Euthanasia Bill lacks support

■ By Richard Sherratt

A bid to soften the law on euthanasia has failed to get support in the Scottish Parliament. Jeremy Purvis MSP was forced to drop his Bill which would have allowed doctors to help terminally ill patients kill themselves. Meanwhile, a new UK study suggests that doctors shortened the lives of almost 3,000 patients in 2004 – two thirds of whom did not give their consent.¹

¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4620778.stm> as at 7 February 2006



The Scottish Parliament

Blasphemous musical tours the nation



Stewart Lee is the director and co-writer of *Jerry Springer The Opera*.

■ By Mike Judge

The blasphemous and sleazy musical, *Jerry Springer The Opera*, has embarked on a national tour of theatres.

The tour started in Plymouth in January and is scheduled to end in Brighton in July. The show presents Christ as a foul-mouthed woman beater, who declares himself to be 'a bit gay' and gets sexual pleasure from defecating in a nappy.

Plymouth 27th January to 4th February	Newcastle 1st May to 6th May
Birmingham 6th February to 18th February	Norwich 8th May to 13th May
York 20th February to 25th February	Bristol 15th May to 20th May
Leicester 27th February to 4th March	Bradford 22nd May to 27th May
Glasgow 6th March to 11th March	Southend 29th May to 3rd June
Aberdeen 13th March to 18th March	Liverpool 5th June to 10th June
Manchester 20th March to 1st April	Cardiff 12th June to 17th June
Oxford 3rd April to 8th April	Nottingham 19th June to 24th June
Cambridge 10th April to 15th April	Croydon 26th June to 1st July
Milton Keynes 17th April to 22nd April	Brighton 3rd July to 8th July
Edinburgh 24th April to 29th April	

The tour was originally shelved after a third of theatres pulled out. The Arts Council of England also refused to give £200,000 to support the tour.¹

But some regional theatres clubbed together, determined to stage the offensive show. The theatres have agreed to pool the marketing costs and the show's creative team has decided to waive their royalties.

Many of the 21 theatres that

have agreed to stage the show are propped up with council tax payers' money. The Christian Institute is encouraging people who oppose the show to make their views known to local councillors and theatre donors.

More information about the national tour and how to object to it can be found on our website (www.christian.org.uk).

¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/arts/4261796.stm> as at 8 February 2006

Christians cause stores to drop Springer DVD

■ By Mike Judge

Supermarket giants and high street stores have stopped selling DVDs of *Jerry Springer The Opera* because of complaints from the public and low consumer demand.

Sainsbury's was the first retailer to withdraw the product following complaints from members of the public. Since then Woolworths, Asda and Tesco have also stopped stocking copies of the blasphemous musical in their shops.

The show caused an avalanche of complaints to the BBC when it was screened on TV last year. It describes Jesus as 'the son of the fascist tyrant on high'; says God raped Mary and contains hundreds of extremely explicit swear words.

The British Board of Film Classification gave the DVD an 18 certificate because of its extreme

content. The BBFC says it has "Very frequent and very strong" language, and has "Frequent, strong references" to sex or nudity.¹

A Sainsbury's spokesman told the BBC News website, "We received numerous complaints from customers about the Jerry Springer DVD and it showed poor sales in the two weeks it was available in our stores.

We removed the DVD early because we would never wish to cause any offence to our customers, but based on commercial reasons the DVD would have been withdrawn soon thereafter."²

Woolworths decided to remove it from its shelves for 'commercial reasons'. The company put out a statement saying, "Woolworths is guided by legislation and regulatory bodies on what it can and cannot sell in its stores. Our

decisions to sell products are based on customer demand. The product is not currently available in stores".³ Sadly, Woolworths is still selling the DVD from its website. Asda is also not selling the DVD in their stores, but is making it available on its website. Tesco has joined Sainsbury's in removing the film from its stores and website.

WH Smith has so far stubbornly refused to be sensitive to Christian objections and it is continuing to sell the product on the high street. A letter to The Christian Institute from WH Smith's Customer Relations Manager, Richard Ryan, says they do "not act as censors and have no plans to withdraw this DVD from sale."⁴

¹ <http://www.bbfc.co.uk/website/Classified.nsf/0/1035285CFC2D38A8802570B70020FEFD?OpenDocument> as at 8 February 2006

² <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/4514748.stm> as at 8 February 2006

³ Private correspondence with The Christian Institute, 9 December 2005

⁴ Private correspondence with The Christian Institute, 4 January 2006



More sex shops blocked following Christian protests

■ By Chris Prest

Christian campaigners have successfully stopped the application for a sex shop licence in Galashiels. Over 60 letters of objection were sent to the licensing authority and councillors voted unanimously to reject the application.

In recent months sex shops have also been stopped following Christian opposition south of the border in Bromley, St Helens and Conwy.

Objections are far more likely to be successful if they make clear reference to the legal reasons for turning down an application. In most cases, this is likely to be the unsuitability of the location.

The Christian Institute has published a comprehensive manual entitled *Stopping Sex Shops*, which many have successfully used. This is a step by step guide on what to do from looking out for applications in the local press through to the licence hearing itself.

It contains clear practical advice, case studies, and the law as it relates to sex shops. It equips people to use the laws regulating the sex shop industry. Christian Institute advice has helped to block or close down at least 37 sex shops. If you wish to oppose a sex shop application in your area please contact us for a copy, price £8.50 including postage and packing.

Christians believe that sex is a precious gift of God. They have always opposed measures which cheapen sex and detach it from its proper context of marriage. Sex shops are an affront to God. Christians should resist them and can resist them by using the existing law.

Superdrug sells sex toys on the high street

■ By Alasdair Armour

The health and beauty retailer, Superdrug, is selling 'sex toys' in its high street shops across the UK.

In partnership with condom manufacturer, Durex, it is now selling a variety of sex toys including vibrators. The range of products is called "Durex Play". *The Times* commented that Superdrug is 'upbeat and upfront about carrying Play products'.¹

Other well-known stores, including Asda and Tesco, are also selling one or two sex toys.

The selling of sex toys in high street family stores normalises the idea that sex is merely for physical gratification and a commodity that can be bought and sold.

Last year high street chemist, Boots, dropped plans to sell a wide range of sex products. This came on the back of many customers objecting to the idea. "We have had lots of feedback about it from customers and our own people and we just decided it wasn't for us," a Boots spokesman said.²

Boots have since decided to sell a small range of the less extreme "Durex Play" products, but not the full range being sold by Superdrug.

Complaints by Christian consumers can have a restraining influence on retailers, who are often sensitive to negative public opinion.

¹ *The Times*, 25 November 2005

² <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/4190693.stm> as at 8 February 2006

Clarke refuses to reverse change in cannabis laws



■ By Chris Prest

The Government has decided not to reverse its decision to weaken the cannabis laws. The announcement came in January despite overwhelming evidence of the harm caused by the drug.

Many commentators expected the Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, to announce a U-turn in light of research showing an increase in super-strength cannabis and links with mental illness.

Instead, the Government says it will launch a 'public information' campaign to stress that cannabis

is harmful and still illegal. But critics say that keeping the weaker cannabis laws sends out a mixed message.

The law was weakened in 2004 when cannabis was reclassified as a 'class C' drug, making possession a non-arrestable offence in most cases.

Since the downgrading of the drug at least 40,000 cannabis smokers have been let off by police with a verbal warning – people who would otherwise have got a criminal record.¹

In 2002 The Christian Institute published a briefing, *Going soft*

on cannabis, in which we pointed to research evidence showing large increases in the strength of cannabis and a link with mental health problems.

Kate Hoey, one of ten Labour MPs who voted against weakening the law, said recently: "The evidence on mental health was all there when the Commons debated this. I mentioned it in my speech, and so did other MPs. Nobody was calling for reclassification except a bunch of trendies."²

¹ *Daily Mail*, 6 January 2006

² *Loc cit*

Top PR firm hired to win gay adoption campaign

■ By Mike Judge

It must not be seen as a 'gay rights' measure. This was the advice of a public relations company hired by Britain's leading adoption charity to campaign for gay adoption.

The British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) paid an undisclosed fee to Connect Public Affairs to run a PR campaign from March 2001 to November 2002.

In November 2002 the law was changed in England and Wales to allow unmarried couples, including same-sex couples, to adopt children.

An article published in the industry paper, *PR Week*, reveals the calculated way in which BAAF and its hired PR company obscured

the debate over gay adoption: "The initial draft of the Bill contained no change on the question of who should be eligible to adopt. For a change to be made, an amendment to the draft Bill would be required. When the lobbying effort began, a key strategic decision was not to position the issue as anything to do with the civil rights of gay or unmarried heterosexual couples, but about the welfare of the child."

The article continued, "The agency found that within the Government there was little philosophical objection to the idea, but that more important to many was a desire to avoid lurid headlines about New Labour making it easier for gay people to adopt."

In terms of dealing with the press *PR Week* says, "Previously,

press coverage had been avoided due to fears that the 'gay adoption' angle could get out of control. A story was placed in the press stating that the Government was afraid to be seen to be promoting gay adoption, and that this fear risked having the affect of penalising unmarried straight couples. In this way, the Government's concern about getting on the wrong side of the morality debate was successfully turned on its head."¹

The tactics employed by the spin doctors strongly suggest that 'gay rights' were the motivating factor behind the law change, rather than any genuine interest in the needs of vulnerable children.

¹ *PR Week*, 15 November 2002. See <http://www.prweek.com/uk/search/article/163909> as at 8 February 2006

Adoption group warns social workers about placing children with gay couples

■ By Jonathan Phillips

Britain's leading adoption group has admitted that there are dangers in placing children with homosexual parents.

The British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) campaigned heavily to change the law to allow unmarried couples, including homosexual couples, to adopt children.

However, in policy guidelines issued in 2003 (after the law was changed by Parliament) BAAF warned social workers: "At matching, agencies should carefully consider how an individual child or sibling group will fare being raised in a family where the parents are of the same sex. For children placed, this may represent an additional 'difference' along with the others they will have experienced i.e. being looked after and adopted."¹

Indeed, despite repeated assertions to the contrary, many studies indicate significant differences between homosexual and heterosexual parenting outcomes for children. Even pro-gay researchers now admit that children brought up by homosexuals are more likely to engage in homosexual activity themselves.²

In 2002 The Christian Institute published Europe's largest-ever review of research into same-sex parenting. Research consistently shows that heterosexual marriage is the best environment for raising children.

¹ Assessing Lesbian and Gay Foster Carers and Adopters, BAAF Practice Note 44, page 8

² Stacey, J and Biblarz, T J, '(How) does the Sexual Orientation of Parents Matter?', *American Sociological Review*, 66, 2001, page 163

Plans to allow homosexual couples to adopt children

■ By Jonathan Phillips

Legislation allowing unmarried and homosexual couples to adopt children is expected to come before the Scottish Parliament in March.

In 2002 the law in England and Wales was changed to allow unmarried couples to adopt. The change proved to be highly controversial. The new laws have only just come into force south of the border.

Currently Scottish law only allows married couples and individuals to adopt. But it is now argued that unmarried couples should be allowed to adopt in order to 'widen the pool' of potential adopters and so increase the number of adoptions.

While there is a problem with the number of adoptions, a lack of suitable married couples is not the cause. The real problem is politically correct adoption agencies which stop perfectly suitable married couples from adopting. Some married couples say they have been refused adoption because they 'have too many books', 'are too rich' or 'go to church'.

Studies show that children raised by same-sex parents do less well than children raised by a married man and woman.¹ It is cruel to deliberately place



First Minister, Jack McConnell, is backing gay adoption

vulnerable children in a situation that is inherently less stable and to deliberately deny an adoptive child a mother or father figure.

¹ Morgan, P, *Children as Trophies? Examining the Evidence on Same-sex Parenting*, The Christian Institute, 2002 see <http://www.christian.org.uk/pdfpublications/childrenastrophies.pdf> as at 13 February 2006

The British inquisition

■ By Mike Judge

A retired Christian couple were subjected to an 80-minute interrogation by police after they complained to their local council about its 'gay rights' policies.

Joe and Helen Roberts, of Fleetwood near Blackpool in Lancashire, also asked to place Christian literature next to gay rights brochures in public buildings, but were refused because it may have offended homosexuals.

The complaint by Mr Roberts, a 73-year-old retired carpenter and a Christian, was polite and courteous but he was firm in saying he believes homosexual practice is morally wrong. He followed up his telephone complaint with a short letter.

Some days later, Mr Roberts was stunned to be visited by two police officers who quizzed him and his 68-year-old wife, Helen, for over an hour. The police told the Roberts they were responding to a reported 'homophobic incident'. The police also said the couple were close to committing a 'hate crime' and were 'walking on eggshells'.¹

Mr and Mrs Roberts contacted



The Christian Institute and we helped them get some legal advice. There is no law against expressing the view that homosexual practice is morally wrong.

The Roberts have lodged formal complaints with the police and the Council asking for a full apology. The police and the council have apologised for any offence caused but have not apologised for their actions. The Council said the official who reported the incident to the police "acted in good faith"², and the police said their decision to investigate was "correct and

the response was appropriate".³ The Roberts do not accept these explanations and are exploring their legal options.

In the meantime, with the permission of the Roberts, we contacted the national press. The *Daily Mail* splashed the story across its front page on 23 December. This led to a flood of media criticism of the police and the Council.

The Roberts' case is part of a worrying trend. In December the family-values campaigner, Lynette Burrows, was telephoned by the police after criticising gay adoption.

In January Sir Iqbal Sacranie, head of the Muslim Council of Britain, was investigated by police after saying civil partnerships were "harmful" to society.

Later that month, a member of the Scottish Parliament called for police to investigate the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Glasgow, Mario Conti, after he said in a sermon that civil partnerships were an attack on traditional moral values.

It has since emerged that guidance from the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) urges police forces to investigate all reports of 'homophobia' to avoid upsetting homosexuals. Police are not obliged to follow ACPO guidance but in practice many do. Following criticism of the guidance, Sir Ian Blair, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police has ordered a review of his force's policy.⁴

¹ *Daily Mail*, 23 December 2005

² Letter to Mr and Mrs J Roberts from Mr J Corry, Managing Director of Wyre Borough Council, 9 January 2006

³ Letter to Mr and Mrs J Roberts from Chief Superintendent Gary J Stephenson, Divisional Commander of Lancashire Constabulary, 9 January 2006

⁴ *Daily Mail*, 14 January 2006

Victory over religious hatred plan

■ By Humphrey Dobson

On 31 January the Government suffered an historic defeat in the House of Commons over its plans for an incitement to religious hatred law. MPs voted by 288 to 278 and then, in a second vote, by 283 to 282 to accept House of Lords' amendments to the Racial and Religious Hatred Bill.

It was only the Government's second defeat in the Commons since coming to power in 1997; as many as 26 Labour MPs voted against the Government and as many as 34 Labour MPs abstained.

The Government's proposals were badly worded and threatened the freedom of anyone to criticise religious or atheistic beliefs. In theory the law does not extend to Scotland but in practical terms the new law covers every institution in Scotland involved in writing,

publishing or broadcasting. This is because Scottish publications are also sold or distributed in England and the English police can travel to Scotland to arrest people.

These serious consequences persuaded the Scottish National Party and David Mundell (the Scottish Conservative MP) to oppose the Bill - a crucial factor in the Government's defeat.

The amendments significantly narrow the scope of the offence and introduce broad protections for free speech and evangelism. The Bill will become law, but with the excellent Lords safeguards included.

The Christian Institute campaigned against the Bill, alongside a wide range of Christian organisations and other groups. Many Christians had prayed and God answered their prayers. Many Christians also met their MP, or wrote letters, or telephoned; this clearly persuaded many MPs to vote against the Government.

The vote was won at a vital time. In the media influential voices are calling for radical curbs on Christian freedom. Last year journalist Matthew Parris effectively called for any preaching of eternal salvation to be made a crime because it spells "danger to society".¹ He said that the "central doctrine" which causes suicide bombers to kill is "the doctrine of eternal life", a belief held by Christians as well as Muslims. Parris concluded, "What divides the 'extremist' mullah from the 'mainstream' mullah, priest or minister is ... philosophically almost trivial."

News from Australia - Pastor Daniel Scot's appeal in his 'religious vilification' case is to be heard by the Supreme Court of Victoria in mid-2006.

¹ *The Spectator*, 23 July 2005

Lap dancing clubs may face tougher laws

■ By Chris Prest

Scottish lap dancing clubs could face tougher rules under a shake up of licensing laws.

An Executive working group which has been looking into 'adult entertainment' is expected to recommend stricter licences for such venues.

Lap dancing clubs in Scotland have fewer restrictions than those in the rest of the UK. This has resulted in Scotland attracting 'sex tourists' from England.¹

Under current Scots law, lap dancing clubs only need a licence

which is primarily concerned with the sale of alcohol. In the rest of the UK a stricter 'public entertainments licence' has to be applied for.

Last April the Executive set up the Adult Entertainment Working Group to look at whether national mandatory controls were needed. They are expected to recommend a tough new licensing regime including an end to "private" dances in booths.

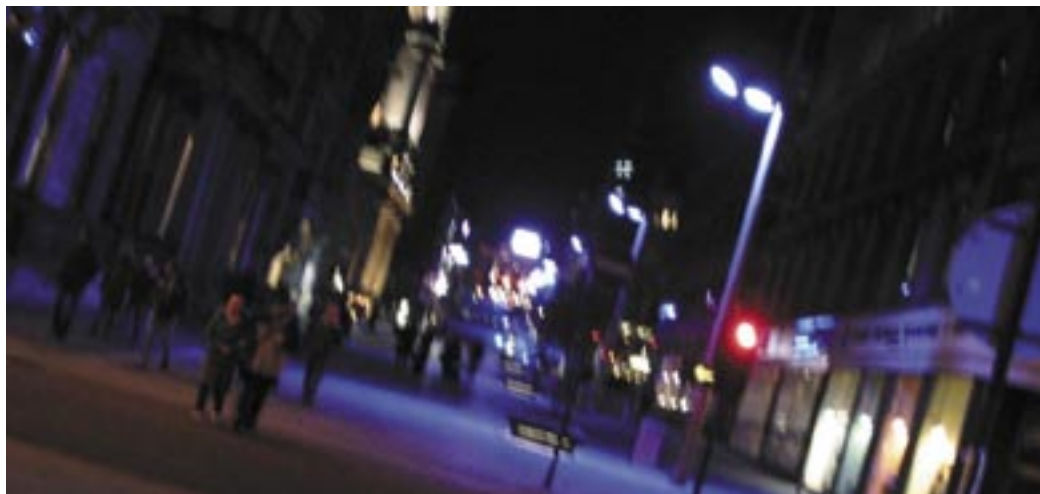
This follows a public consultation in which four-fifths of the respondents thought more controls were needed and a quarter wanted an outright ban.²

SNP MSP Sandra White, who two years ago asked the Executive to investigate the operation of lap dancing clubs, welcomed the steps the working group had taken. However, she wants to see lap dancing clubs licensed like sex shops – which gives local councils more control. She said: "It would give councils the power to refuse licences and not allow clubs to open in the first place."³

¹ *The Herald*, 2 January 2006

² *Loc cit*

³ *Loc cit*



...but laws on prostitution may get weaker

■ By Jonathan Johnson

The Scottish Executive has announced its intention to replace the law against prostitutes soliciting with a much a weaker offence.

It wants to introduce a new law that "will focus on the nuisance or harm arising from street prostitution-related activities, whether caused by seller or purchaser."¹ The Executive says it wants the new law to be introduced in 2007.

These proposals would weaken the law by requiring nuisance or harm to occur before a prosecution could be brought. The Executive is ignoring the fact that prostitution is morally wrong² and intrinsically dangerous.

The planned new offence was recommended by a so-called Expert Group on Prostitution, set up by the Executive.³

There are at present no proposals to allow 'mini brothels' in Scotland, as has been proposed south of the border.

The Executive is opposed to 'tolerance zones' – where prostitution is effectively legalised in a given location. According to press reports, Aberdeen Council is examining the effect of this policy on the tolerance zone it runs in the city.⁴ It is vital that Christians protest against the plans to weaken the law on prostitution when they come before the Scottish Parliament.



¹ *Street Prostitution: Response to the Expert Group*, Scottish Executive, 1 November 2005

² 1 Corinthians 6:16-18

³ *Being Outside: Constructing a Response to Street Prostitution, a Report of the Expert Group on Prostitution in Scotland*, Scottish Executive 2004, pages 2-3

⁴ *Aberdeen Press & Journal*, 18 January 2006

Gambling addiction expected to increase

■ By Jonathan Phillips

More people will suffer from a serious gambling addiction because of new gaming laws, the chief of the new Gambling Commission has admitted.

Peter Dean's comments have embarrassed the Government who assured the Westminster Parliament that the new Gambling Act would not cause a rise in the number of 'problem gamblers'.

In an interview with *The Times* Mr Dean said the Government's assurances that 'super casinos' would not create more gambling addicts were "an exaggeration."¹ He said it was unrealistic to reduce the number of problem gamblers.

But, alarmingly, the head of the new Gambling Commission didn't seem to think more people addicted to gambling was something to worry about. He argued that any future rise in problem gambling should be proportionate to the increase in gambling.

Also of concern was Mr Dean's suggestion that the Gambling Commission will adopt a *laissez faire* approach to regulating the gambling industry.²

This contradicts another key assurance given by the Government during the passage of the Bill that a new Gambling Commission would be a tough regulator at the forefront of protecting problem gamblers.

In just the first five weeks following the Act's abolition of the 24-hour cooling off period between casino membership and play, Britain's 138 casinos received 100,000 more visits.³

¹ *The Times*, 3 January 2006

² *The Times*, 4 January 2006

³ *The Times*, 12 November 2005



Government defeated over 'religious harassment' plans

■ By Humphrey Dobson

In February Westminster passed the new Equality Act. Its scope is vast – including creating the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights; and outlawing religious discrimination by public and private bodies.

Christians have grave concerns that the Act, which applies to England, Scotland and Wales, could turn 'freedom of religion' into 'freedom from religion'.

Nevertheless, we give thanks to God that, after a large defeat in the House of Lords by a majority of 90, the Government dropped the new religious harassment law from the Bill. This was the most dangerous proposal it contained, posing a grave threat to free speech – in a similar way to the Religious Hatred Bill.

The Government has referred the idea to its ongoing Discrimination Law Review. A consultation paper is expected from the Review in late Spring, which may include this issue. Christians must watch out for this and be ready to respond.

The Equality Act comes at a time when unprecedented numbers of public bodies are censoring the Christian faith – and the proposals in the Act outlawing religious discrimination threaten to make the situation worse.

There are exceptions to protect Christian organisations so that, for example, churches can continue to admit only fellow believers into membership.

Although many Christians contacted the Government expressing their concerns that no exceptions were to be made

for Christian Bed & Breakfast establishments, the Government declined to give them the necessary protection.

The Act poses a real threat to religious liberty and Christians must carefully monitor its implementation.

The Act also enables the Government to issue regulations outlawing 'homophobic' discrimination in the public and private sector. It appears that the Government wants to implement the regulations by October this year.

These proposals not only set up a major clash with the right to freedom of religion, they could also force the equal promotion of homosexuality and heterosexuality in all schools. This possibility must be strongly opposed.

Swedish Pastor wins 'gay hate crime' case

In July 2003 a church Pastor from Sweden was arrested after giving a sermon saying homosexuality was a "deep cancerous tumor [sic] on society."¹ Ake Green was charged with inciting hatred against homosexuals and in June 2004 he was convicted and sentenced to one month in jail. He appealed and was acquitted in February 2005. However Sweden's chief prosecutor appealed the acquittal to the Supreme Court of Sweden (SCS). In November 2005 the SCS affirmed the judgment of the Court of Appeal and the case against Mr. Green was dismissed. Gay activists in the UK are calling for a 'homophobic hatred' law. The Government has said it is 'open to considering' such an offence.²

¹ <http://www.cbn.com/CBNNews/News/050214b.asp> as at 8 February 2006

² Baroness Scotland of Asthal, House of Lords, Hansard, 14 March 2005, cols 1195-1196

New fast-track divorce laws for Scotland

■ By Callum Webster

The Scottish Executive has backed 'quickie divorce' proposals despite widespread opposition.

On 15 December the Scottish Parliament passed the Family Law (Scotland) Bill. MSPs voted by 91 to 34 to slash the waiting time for 'no fault' divorce to just one year where both spouses consent. The proposal to drive down the waiting time for contested divorces to two years was passed by 93 votes to 31.

Under the old law the separation periods for divorce were two years (where both spouses consented) and five years (where one spouse did not consent). In earlier stages of the Bill, a committee of MSPs voted to water down the proposed reductions, but the Executive rejected their change.

At present Scotland has a lower

divorce rate than England and Wales.¹ But making divorce easier will encourage more people to divorce. Cutting the waiting periods also reduces the time available for couples to work through marital problems.

In recent years, an average of 13% of divorce petitions initiated in Scotland have not been completed.² The waiting period has clearly given many people opportunity to think again before

divorcing. But by cutting the time available for reconciliation the Executive is placing couples on a conveyor belt to divorce.

The Christian Institute played a key role in opposing these measures. We published briefings and staff held meetings with individual MSPs from across Scotland. We organised a seminar in the Scottish Parliament at which Norman Dennis, Visiting Fellow at Newcastle University, spoke on the topic of family breakdown

and its harmful effect on children. Two MSPs, Fergus Ewing (SNP) and Murdo Fraser (Conservative) co-sponsored the event.

The Christian Institute also commissioned an opinion poll which showed that 62% of Scots opposed the Executive's suggested waiting period for non-contested divorces, and 55% opposed their suggested waiting period for contested divorces. The poll made headline news in the *Scottish Daily Mail* during the week of the debate.³



¹ *Population Trends*, 122, Winter 2005, ONS, Table 2.1, pages 59-60

² *Civil Judicial Statistics Scotland, editions 1999-2002*, Table 3.7

³ *Scottish Daily Mail*, 13 December 2005

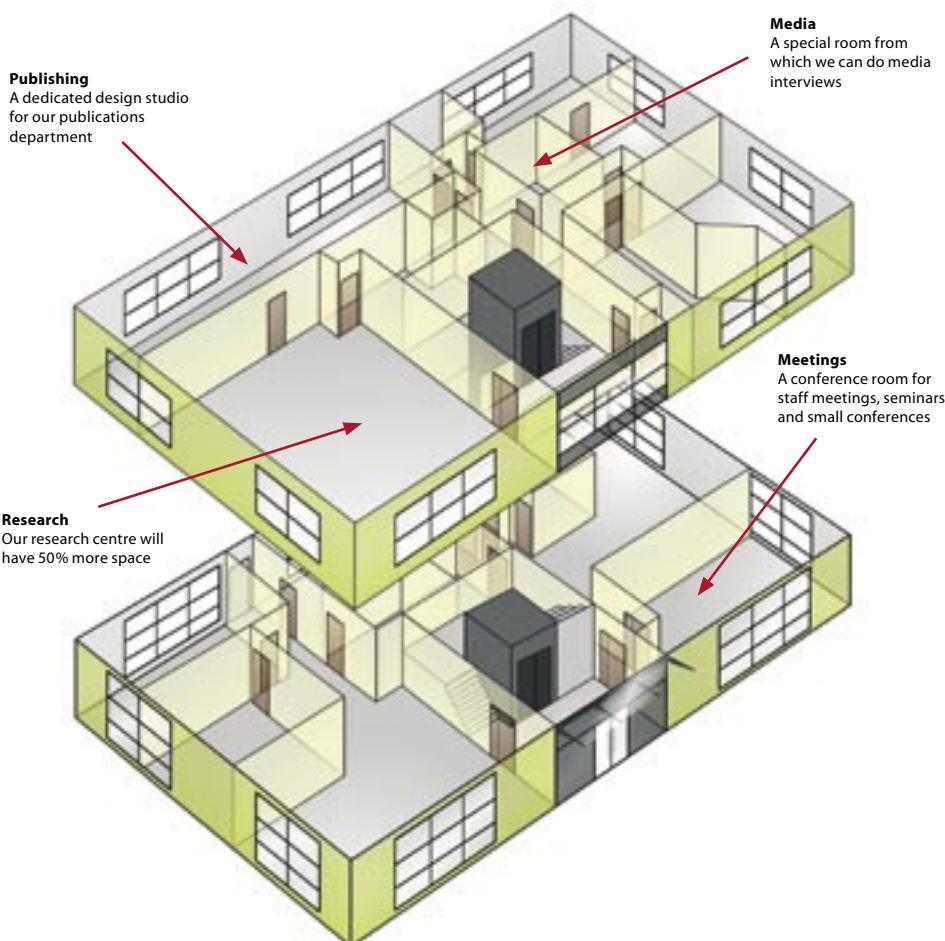
Building under way for our new HQ

The Institute's new purpose-built headquarters is taking shape on the outskirts of Newcastle. As this picture shows, the steel structure is in place and bricks are being laid. The building is part of a scheme of office buildings with easy transport links and ample car parking space. The developers expect it to be complete in the Summer and, God willing, we hope that the new HQ will be fully up and running during August. Most of the cost has been met by gifts from supporters, but there is still a shortfall of about £345,000. Unless we can raise that amount through donations, it will have to be covered by commercial borrowing.



Colin Hart (centre) on site with Architect, Trevor Condy (left) and our Office Manager, Jon Errington (right)

We still need your help to reduce the cost



Our new purpose-built headquarters will allow us to do more work, better. The Trustees of The Christian Institute believe this is the best use of our resources. It will give us more space, tailor-made to meet our present and future needs. It will give us a permanent asset and improvements to the building will benefit us rather than a landlord.

Jonathan Broome, a Chartered Surveyor and Christian Institute supporter says this about our building: "The Christian Institute has done well to secure a scarce freehold headquarters office on a well-located Business Park and as such this represents a prudent use of their resources."

Christian architect, Trevor Condy, has been helping us design the internal layout of the building. It has been designed to be flexible so that it can adapt to future requirements. He says, "God willing they will have a building that meets their current and their future needs. It will serve them well."

The cost of our new headquarters will be £1.2million. By God's grace, most of that has already been raised through donations from supporters. There is a shortfall of about £345,000. We are ready to cover this with commercial borrowing if need be, but we would rather raise the amount through donations.