

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (23rd March 2021) by Dr Rob Faure Walker

Soon after Anders Breivik killed 77 people, the Norwegian Prime Minister said that ‘our response is more democracy, more openness, and more humanity’. This was not an easy response, not least in the face of such evil as Breivik’s killing of so many children, a crime for which he refused to show remorse. As the historian Rutger Bregman writes,

Democracy, more openness and more humanity are precisely what’s not easy. On the contrary, tough talk, retaliation, shutting down borders, dropping bombs, dividing up the world into good guys and bad – that’s easy. *That’s* looking the other way.

Sadly, the Government have attempted to ‘look the other way’ by introducing the **Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill 2021 (“PCSC Bill”)**. Thousands of British citizens have protested against the Bill on Clapham Common, in Westminster, and in Bristol. They can clearly see that, **rather than encouraging difficult conversations, the Bill would further divide us into ‘good guys and bad’**. In doing so, the legislation proposed by the Bill will keep us less safe.

Tougher Sentencing: Proposals for tougher sentencing come from the noble intent of keeping people safe. It assumes that the threat of punishment will reduce crime rates. The trouble is that decades of research into prisons and sentencing indicate quite the opposite. When we look at the data, tougher sentencing does not act as a deterrent and leads to higher rates of re-offending. **The difficult but effective response is to [create a system that rehabilitates criminals](#)**. This will be remedied by reforming and funding our broken prisons, not by the expansion of criminal justice.

Abolishing Restorative Justice: The Government’s argument that ‘this legislation ensures that we can introduce tougher sentences’, reveals the flawed logic at the heart of the Bill. This is proven by **Section 136 of the Bill** that seeks to abolish restorative justice approaches, one of the few aspects of the criminal justice system that [may actually reduce crime](#). **The Bill’s proposals will increase re-offending rates that are already very high.**

Criminalising Travellers: Criminalising travellers for a way of life that is older than Parliament will not protect property, **it will further divide society**. Travellers must be provided with pitches, not criminalised and chased off common land.

Criminalising Protest: The UK has a long tradition of policing by consent. If the Bill is passed and the Police are asked to enact anti-democratic laws, the public will inevitably stand up for their right to freedom of speech and expression. As has already been shown around the country, **the Police cannot police a protest that has overwhelming public support. Nor should they, so long as the United Kingdom is a functioning democracy.**

Like the Police, the Government can only govern with the consent of the people. The people stand very clearly against these efforts to create a more authoritarian country: the Government and Conservative MPs must recognise that proceeding with this Bill risks them losing consent to govern. **A Government without consent is not a democratic government, but a government that responds to fear with ‘more democracy, more openness, and more humanity’ creates a strong democracy. The Bill must be dropped by the Government and opposed by all Conservative MPs who are brave enough to stand for the traditional liberal values of their party.**

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