



'EQUALITY OATH' FOR PUBLIC OFFICE HOLDERS

1. EQUALITY OATH TO SNUFF OUT FREEDOM

The Government wants to bring in a new 'equality oath' for all people holding a public office. School governors, civil servants, people working in the NHS, councillors or those standing for Parliament could all have to swear the new equality oath in future before taking up their roles.

The plans threaten to turn supporters of traditional marriage into social pariahs, excluding them from public life and destroying many people's livelihoods. Everyone knows that when 'equality' rules, then people who disagree with same-sex marriage are punished.

2. EQUALITY VERSUS FREEDOM

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid wrote about the proposal in *The Sunday Times* on 18 December. He explained that he wants to introduce a new oath enshrining 'British values' for all holders of public office:

*"I'm talking about tolerating the views of others, even if you disagree with them. About believing in freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from abuse. **I'm talking about a belief in equality**, democracy and the democratic process. And about respect for the law, even if you think the law is an ass."* [emphasis added]

While most of these concepts are innocuous, throwing the equality agenda into the mix is very dangerous indeed. 'Equality' is usually the code word used when suppressing dissent about same-sex marriage. It's the Equality Commission in Northern Ireland which has hounded Ashers Baking Co. through the courts for refusing to bow the knee to same-sex marriage. Being law-abiding and supporting democracy has not protected Ashers from politically correct censure.

3. 'BRITISH VALUES' LITMUS TEST FOR SCHOOLS

Already Ofsted uses support for same-sex marriage as a litmus test for its 'British values' inspections of Jewish and Christian schools. The National Association of Jewish Orthodox Schools said that girls "felt bullied into answering inspectors' questions" and that pupils and staff were "traumatised and ashamed" (*Jewish News online*, 14 October 2014).

During inspections at Christian free schools in Durham and Sunderland, primary school children were asked to explain what lesbians "did" and whether they knew pupils "who had two mums" (*Daily Mail*, 24 January 2015; *Sunderland Echo*, 14 January 2015).

C4M has even received evidence from one school of Ofsted inspectors interrogating teachers individually about their personal beliefs on marriage.

If this is how the 'British values' test is already applied in schools, it shows the likely effect of a 'British values' oath for public office. It would be a powerful tool for enforcing political correctness. Many people will object to the political elite seeking to force its beliefs on everyone else.

4. "EQUALITY RULES"

An oath for public office holders was recommended by Dame Louise Casey in her recent report about the problems of integration in Britain (*The Casey Review – A review into opportunity and integration*, December 2016).

When Dame Louise went on Radio 4 to publicise her report, she said it amounts to a declaration that "equality rules" (*Today and World at One*, 5 December 2016). While her analysis of deep-rooted social problems will resonate with many, her solution will not. A nebulous concept of 'equality' will all too easily be used to silence supporters of traditional marriage.

Commentator Charles Moore responded to Sajid Javid's statement by saying: "No doubt most of us believe in equality in some respects – equality before the law, for instance. But we live under a hereditary monarchy, with an established Church, and the right to inherit wealth. All of these defy equality, yet are cherished parts of our way of life" (*The Daily Telegraph*, 19 December 2016).

It is hard to imagine how the Equality Act 2010 could be used as the basis for the proposed equality oath. The Equality Act was designed to regulate people's actions, not to change their beliefs. Sometimes there is a clash of rights, with people of different protected characteristics on different sides of a court case. Equality law simply can't provide an answer to extremism.

5. WILL IT DO ANY GOOD?

If the proposed equality oath is aimed at sidelining extremists from society, it is unlikely to work. A terrorist is unlikely have a twinge of conscience in falsely swearing an equality oath if he is then willing to go on and attempt murder.

According to [BBC News online](#), a Government source has acknowledged that the proposed oath on its own would be insufficient to weed out extremism or promote integration (18 December 2016).

The equality oath would exclude people who reject the modern creed of political correctness from public life, with opponents of same-sex marriage especially in the firing line. Many people at the heart of life in their local community would be purged and their valuable work brought to an end. What immense harm the equality oath would do not only to our freedoms but to the whole British way of life.