



## Killing with Kindness

It seems that Conservative party members and even the so-called media 'liberati', have welcomed the resurgence of Compassionate Conservatism.

With a crushing victory over David Davis, David Cameron's supporters could be forgiven for thinking that his victory was as inevitable as the certainty that a David would win the race. But Davis always had a strong showing of support among party colleagues. Cameron will have to be careful that the parallels many are drawing between his own meteoric rise and that of Tony Blair do not include him being similarly seen as remote from the Parliamentary party.

Cameron has to walk that fine tightrope of maintaining the core vote while also reaching out to voters who have not voted for the party for years - and in the case of many younger voters - ever. Cameron is already being accused of selling out in favour of a new consensus politics.

Parallels have even been drawn between his acceptance of certain traditional 'soft left' ideals with the acceptance by Blair of much of Thatcher's legacy.

The appointment of Iain Duncan Smith to oversee a social justice policy group rewards the former leader for his hard work in developing his own social justice 'think tank'. It also brings the ideals of 'Compassionate Conservatism', so long championed by the Conservative Christian Fellowship, amongst others, back to the fore.

Cameron has also not been shy in tackling the issue of climate change. The late James Goldsmith's son, *Ecologist* magazine editor Zac Goldsmith, along with ex-environment secretary John Gummer, is heading up a new high profile environment policy group.

David Cameron has also been careful, along with other politicians, to endorse the 'wristband generation', in particular the aims of *Make Poverty History*. Young, well

informed and non violent, the electoral demographic that supports the aims of Tearfund, Oxfam, Micah Challenge, etc will likely represent a key electoral group for the future.

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himself up to maximise appeal to Liberal Democrat supporters. A keynote speech in Liberal Democrat-held Hereford was aimed at accentuating internal rumblings about Charles Kennedy's leadership, exacerbated by Cameron's success. A You Gov poll for the Daily Telegraph found just 11% of people questioned thought he would make the best Prime Minister. That marks a decline of 7% since May's general election. In contrast, 30% thought Tony Blair and David Cameron would be the best premier.

A Mori poll in November put dissatisfaction rates with the Government at 57%. This figure includes 1/3 of Labour supporters, while only 33% claim to be satisfied.

December's *Guardian/ICM* poll placed the

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Conservatives ahead of Labour by 37% to 36%, with the Liberal Democrats on 21%.

Remarkably it seems that even after just a few days in post Mr Cameron put the Conservatives in the lead over Labour in the opinion polls and even seemingly managed to take 2 percentage points away from Liberal Democrat support. Just a

month ago, Labour had a 5 point lead.

Even more dramatic is the swing in Tory fortunes since the early autumn, before the start of the leadership contest. Then, Labour had an eight-point lead. The Tories were last in the lead in June 2004, when Tony Blair was under intense pressure over Iraq.

But despite good news for the Conservatives there are many hills to climb. There is still a long way to go before reaching the magical 40% figure for re-election. Another key challenge is how to obtain more women MPs. Labour went for positive discrimination with all-women short lists, but this is highly controversial. Mr Cameron has promoted four women to his front bench, but this is still less than the number of Davids in the Shadow Cabinet!

Labour's strategy of insisting that despite the advent of the 'Camerons' the 'Tories' are still the same old party may appear sound tactically, but might also run the risk of appearing to underestimate their new opponents who both the media and country appear to be taking very seriously. John Prescott for one is now speaking openly of re-visiting class war language with Etonians in the front line!

George Osborne, whom many considered too young make Shadow Chancellor, let alone keep the job under the new regime, has done well against Mr Brown, who vainly tried to dismiss him with a suggestion that the "Tories should have jumped two Generations".

For Mr Blair, however, the biggest problem might arise from the fact that David Cameron has promised to back him over controversial education reform. Winston Churchill once said "The opposition occupies the benches in front of you but the enemy sits behind you". Mr Cameron may yet succeed in killing the Prime Minister with kindness.

## Still It Goes On

The Government, in attempting to reverse most of the changes made to the Racial and Religious Hatred Bill by a substantial majority in the House of Lords, sought to achieve a trade-off deal with opposition parties by introducing major (and potentially unconstitutional) amendments before Christmas that would have once again removed necessary protection for freedom of speech.

Conservative and Liberal Democrat shadow ministers are to be commended for resisting intense pressure to give way and the Government will have to re-think yet again. What was to have been a simple and quick process has now become a serious stumbling block for the Home Office. Third Reading of the Bill, which was to have taken place in the House of Lords on the 19th of December, has now been postponed until the new year. Parliament returns on the 9th of January and it is likely that key votes will follow soon after that date.

The proposed Government amendments - described as 'substantial concessions' - aimed to achieve the following:

- Maintain a low level prosecution threshold so that an offence could be committed if words are perceived to be 'abusive or insulting'. The Lords had removed these in favour of a higher threshold insisting that offensive words must at least be 'threatening'.
- Remove the necessity of proving 'intent' for the prosecution of a person charged with inciting religious hatred. This means that people who do not intend to stir up hatred but who actually believe that what they are saying or writing is true and justified could still find themselves guilty of the offence.
- Introduce a new defence of 'subjective recklessness' ostensibly to cover people who did not intend to stir up hatred. However, most legal experts agree that this proposed defence is confusing, technically ineffective and would consequently offer little protection. As an alternative to proving 'intent' a

prosecution would have to show that a person was 'reckless' with regard to the use of words likely to stir up hatred. But in the legal world 'recklessness' is a difficult concept. It is probable that in practice the prosecution would merely have to demonstrate that when the person said something that was likely to stir up hatred they were aware of a possibility that hatred could be stirred up. In reality, this offers virtually no protection. The fact is that in certain circumstances, and with certain religious groups, even the most careful use of words can be liable to be heard as offensive or insulting or abusive because they operate at such a low offence threshold. Other groups are known to tolerate much higher thresholds of offence. The implication is that it would be alright to insult some groups but not others. The likely overall impact is that free speech would be chilled generally and people would fear to say anything that could be potentially actionable on criminal grounds.

There is little doubt that the proposed Government changes would once again have criminalised freedom of expression and potentially introduced community tensions and divisions.

It is crucial that Christians and many others continue to lobby the Government as well as encouraging MPs and Lords to remain steadfast in opposing effective reintroduction of the dangerous original legislation under the guise of 'concessions'. Labour backbench MPs must also be concerned that the Government is apparently going back on commitments to find a fair middle way that achieves reasonable protection against incitement to hatred whilst preserving fundamental civil liberties, especially freedom of speech. Christians and others should continue to challenge them about their own Government's questionable approach to this issue which remains so widely unpopular, divisive and undemocratic.

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## Care Not Killing

Lord Joffe introduced a new Private Member's Bill into the House of Lords on 9 November. The Bill seeks to legalise physician assisted suicide for the terminally ill. This is the latest step in a move towards trying to change the law on euthanasia in the UK. The Voluntary Euthanasia Society (which is changing its name to Dying in Dignity UK Ltd) has been effective in attempting to shape public opinion in favour of changes to the law. In contrast, opposition to a change in the law is relatively fragmented. Accordingly, a new coalition is urgently required which can bring together organisations and individuals both to campaign for more and better palliative care and to oppose any change in the law. 'Care not Killing' is a new UK based alliance of individuals and organisations with 3 aims:

- To bring together human rights groups, healthcare groups, palliative care groups and faith based organisations with the aim of promoting more and better palliative care
- To ensure that existing laws against euthanasia and assisted suicide are not weakened or repealed during the lifetime of the

current Parliament

- To influence the balance of public opinion against any weakening of the existing law.
- 'Care not Killing' seeks to attract the broadest support among the medical profession and allied health services as well as in society at large from those who are united in opposition to the implementation of changes in law that would allow euthanasia to be effectively legalised. The coalition will appeal to people of every faith and race and will use powerful arguments based not only on reason but also on well researched evidence.

The new coalition campaign was launched officially on the 13th December. The Evangelical Alliance is a key member of the Care Not Killing steering group

For detailed information about the Bill please access [http://www.cmf.org.uk/index/joffe\\_bill.htm](http://www.cmf.org.uk/index/joffe_bill.htm)

## The 'Alive and Kicking' Campaign

These are very difficult times for God's 'little ones' of Matthew 18 and 25. The fragile elderly, the terminally ill, the disabled, all those living on the margins of our materialistic society, far from being cherished are instead often under threat. The quest for physical perfection acknowledges few boundaries and increasingly the weak or vulnerable are cast aside in the process. In such a context it is hardly surprising that the unborn child, helpless and tiny, has become the most marginalised of all God's creatures, with too few voices raised in his or her defence. We are more likely nowadays to hear emotional rhetoric about the rights of animals than in opposition to the abortion of our fellow humans developing in the womb.

Which is why a number of concerned groups have come together, including the Evangelical Alliance, to form 'Alive & Kicking', a campaign in defence of the rights of the unborn child. This is, we believe, the first time that a formal alliance of this kind has been set up to address the big ethical issues surrounding abortion, and it is hoped that many more groups and individual members will sign up to this campaign.

Since the law was passed in 1967, abortion numbers in the UK have tripled and continue to rise. The recorded total so far is over 6.2 million, a number which is almost impossible to comprehend. There are no memorials to any of the victims; most of them are unknown, recorded as quick ticks on abortion referral papers. But 6.2 million is a horrifying figure which cannot be ignored; it equals 10% of our current population; is 5 times higher than the UK casualties of two World Wars. And every single day another 600 lives are aborted. If we look at abortion worldwide, there is no disease, no natural or man-made disaster which is likely ever to result in such colossal loss of life.

We know, and have had confirmed by opinion polls, that both public and Parliament are unhappy with the high numbers of abortions in the UK, and the majority would be pleased to see a serious attempt to reduce these figures. This is the initial objective of 'Alive & Kicking', to respond to a new compassionate mood in the nation and to try in the first instance to halve the yearly total of 200,000 abortions. The discriminatory nature of abortion for disability must be addressed. It is a little known but shameful fact that a disabled baby can be aborted in the UK right up to the moment of birth.

As part of its campaign to reduce the annual numbers, 'Alive and Kicking' will support initiatives aimed at substantial reduction in the current abortion time limit of 24 weeks. This

in itself would save many lives but is only one aspect of our proposed solution. We are asking, for example, that the existing abortion law be applied more rigorously, ensuring that abortions for social reasons are not permitted. All anecdotal evidence suggests that abortion is currently effectively on demand rather than respecting the strict protocols originally promised. If the developing baby is to have any protection at all in the womb it is vital that the law, unjust as it may be, is at least applied properly. The important role of doctors must be maintained. It was originally intended to provide protection both for the woman and the baby and not as a pro forma gesture as is the present practice.

Part of the campaign will address the right of women to receive accurate factual information about the medical and psychological risks of abortion. Women also deserve to be made properly aware of the many alternatives to abortion provided by those working in pregnancy crisis care centres. It takes time to explore these alternatives carefully and we will recommend that a cooling-off period is established after pregnancy is established but before an abortion is permitted. Government, too, must accept responsibility so that nobody ends up in an abortion clinic because of any form of discrimination whatsoever. The country's commitment to equality must be genuine, not mere lip service. Social conditions, which lead women to contemplate abortion, whether because of economic hardship, relationship problems, discrimination in the work or education arena, must all be addressed. Abortion is often seen in the UK as the only choice, and this situation must be changed.

Remember that Matthew 25.40 does not only exhort us not to harm to the weak and vulnerable; we are also called to positive action in their defence. Not to try and save those in need is equally a neglect of the Christian mission. That is why we urge every one to respond to this call and join the 'Alive & Kicking' Campaign. We need prayers, we need voices, we need practical skills, and we need money.

Please help.

For further information contact:  
info@aliveandkickingcampaign.org

Josephine Quintavalle  
Alive and Kicking Campaign

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## A Sledgehammer to Crack a Nut?

Scotland

MSP's expenses rose by more than £100,000 last year to £9.5 million. Officials at the Scottish Parliament increased the 12 pages of members' expenses normally made public to 700 pages. The move is intended to reinforce the Parliament's reputation as being among the most open in the world. The publication of the more detailed figures follows the resignation of former Scottish Conservative leader David McLetchie after controversy over his taxi expenses.

The increased openness on expenses was welcomed by Scotland's Information Commissioner. Presiding Officer George Reid said the public had a right to know how MSPs were spending their allowances and that it was more proof of Holyrood's commitment to transparency.

Allowances have been a sticky subject for some MSPs over the seven years. The former First Minister Henry McLeish resigned because of expenses; Liberal Democrat Keith Raffan left the Parliament last year with

unexplained expenses; and the Tory Leader lost his leadership over expenses.

Does this mean lots of Scottish politicians are on the fiddle? That would be the picture many journalists would like to paint, but I do not think that is true. Most MSPs I have come across work extremely hard and work anti-social hours. Devolution was always going to come with a cost and that included expenses. If we want a pro-active Parliament that engages in the process then that will cost.

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The balance that needs to be struck between accountability of public money and over-regulation is a difficult one. I think the Parliament has gone too far in this report. We are being given too much information. The danger we face is yet again the integrity of politicians is being questioned and they feel unable to do the job properly. Yes, we need information. But do we need 700 pages of it?

## Continue to Remember the Poor

Cinema goes throughout the UK are currently being treated to the film adaptation of CS Lewis's book "the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe", and see four children enter into the magical world of Narnia.

There is perhaps some analogy with the world of the asylum seeker in the UK. In Wales, there are four locations where asylum seekers are sent upon arrival in the UK while their claims are being processed - Newport, Cardiff, Swansea or Wrexham. Sadly, it goes some way to explaining why the BNP fielded their two candidates in the recent Westminster election in Swansea East and Wrexham, and had their Wales launch in a disadvantaged area in Cardiff.

It is heartening to find that Christians are playing a significantly prominent role in the lives of asylum seekers in Wales at the moment.

Recently the Welsh Refugee Council enthused about the work that Christian organisations are doing in Wales. It's not glamorous work with no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, and as a result not a lot of people want to get involved.

The church should rightly be seen to be doing such work amongst some of the most vulnerable in our midst. It reflects Peter, James and John's entreaty to Paul and Barnabas that they "continue to remember the poor" (Galatians 2.10).

In the north west of England, a survey of faith communities was recently carried out. Its purpose was to provide statistical proof to highlight the impact that faith communities are having in society as they so often rely on anecdotal evidence which, sadly, doesn't hold much water in the often brutal world of politics. One of the encouraging discoveries was that 'faith' communities - especially referring to Christian ones - "whilst represented in the most affluent areas, are concentrated in areas of highest social need".

The Welsh Assembly holds its next elections in 2007 and the parties are already working on their manifestos. The Alliance in Wales has started holding talks with party officials to highlight key policy areas. Of the seven subject committees of the Assembly, Social Justice and

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Regeneration is the one where perhaps the church most obviously needs to have a voice, and the one that best covers the needs of asylum seekers and the poor.

While being thankful for its work amongst the poor and marginalised, we want the church to have an all-pervasive influence in society and impact each one of the Assembly's subject committees. As God reminded Joshua, "There is still much land to be taken" (Joshua 13.1).

Wales

## In the Public Interest

Writing on the anniversary of the Northern Bank robbery it has certainly been a year of surprises for the political process in Northern Ireland. Alongside one of the biggest bank raids in history, we have had decommissioning of IRA weapons and now the collapse of 'Stormontgate' after the prosecution dropped the case 'in the public interest'.

However the most recent revelations, that Sinn Fein's chief administrator in Stormont, Denis Donaldson, was actually an informer for the British Government, are surely the strangest yet. Even Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern commented 'this is as bizarre as it gets'! However Donaldson's confession serves to raise more questions than it answers.

Was there really a spy ring? PSNI Chief Constable Hugh Orde told the BBC on 20 December that documents recovered in a raid in West Belfast were the catalyst for the collapse of the Assembly.

Are there other British moles inside Sinn Fein? Those within the party must feel a little like the disciples during the Last Supper wondering who might be the next betrayer. And why, in a supposed time of peace do we still need informers? It is ironic that the Government continues to ask the public to take giant leaps forward in the name of peace (legislation relating to 'on the runs' being just one example) when so many trappings of the conflict remain intact.

And what exactly is in the public interest? Certainly the financial fall out from 'Stormontgate' has been huge. By the end of 2004, the devolved administration had cost approximately £53.5 million during the period of its suspension. With MLAs still on half pay these costs have continued to mount throughout 2005.

Following the discovery of the sensitive documents many prison officers and other personnel had to be relocated under the Northern Ireland Housing Executive SPED scheme which allows for the purchase of an owner-occupied property where that owner has been intimidated or threatened. In 2002/03 the scheme received over 680 applications, almost three times as many as the previous year, at a cost of £33 million. The following year this had risen to £43 million.

While given the circumstances these moves were necessary, set against tough budgetary decisions being made in education and health, the introduction of water charging and the possibility of higher rates, it is not difficult to see how, under different circumstances this money could be spent elsewhere.

Some have called for a South African style Truth and Reconciliation Commission to deal with, and heal from, the past here in Northern Ireland. Perhaps that would reveal too many more surprises and that wouldn't be in the public interest.

## Sweden Decides

On July 20, 2003 the elderly Swedish pastor Ake Green, delivered a sermon in his Pentecostal church in the little village of Borgholm, southern Sweden, taking a stand on what he regards as his nation's 'embrace' of homosexuality and what the Bible has to say about it. Though undoubtedly controversial, his sermon ended, however, with words about God's grace and forgiveness, as he added "we cannot condemn these people. Jesus never belittled anyone. He offered them grace." Nevertheless, when his sermon was published in a local paper, Green was convicted in a district court and given a month in jail under 'hate speech' law. The law used to convict Green was originally intended to protect Jews and other ethnic minorities from Nazi sympathizers. But in 2002, the law was amended to protect persons of all sexual orientations equally: heterosexuals, bisexuals and homosexuals. In practice, it seems likely that it may be used principally to effectively criminalize verbal and written attacks on homosexuals who engage in same-sex behaviour. Unlike the 2004 hate propaganda law in Canada, it offers no exclusions for religiously-motivated speech.

Pastor Green appealed the Lower Court decision, with the help of his defense attorney Percy Bratt, Chairman of the Swedish Helsinki Committee for Human Rights. Bratt commented, "The very basic question that is raised in this matter is: to what extent it is criminal to teach from the words in the Bible, so to say." On February 11 2005 Pastor

Green was acquitted, the Appeals Court stating that offering an interpretation of the Bible and urging others to follow it is not illegal.

However, on March 9 the Prosecutor General appealed the decision to the Swedish Supreme Court in Stockholm, asking for a minimum of 6 months prison sentence. The trial was set for November 9 this year. Chief Prosecutor, Fredrik Wersaell, called Green's words "hate speech" and suggested that he use a different Bible in the future, one in which homosexuality is accepted as normal. The whole case achieved international notoriety and was becoming increasingly embarrassing for a country that prides itself on its so-called tolerance.

Finally, on 29 November the Supreme Court upheld the Appeals Court verdict that Pastor Green's remarks did not constitute incitement to hatred. In a 16-page ruling, the Supreme Court commented that Green's sermon was protected by the fundamental civil liberties of freedom of speech and religion. Alliance Defense Fund Chief Counsel Benjamin Bull, who travelled to Sweden to advise Pastor Green and observe the trial, commented regarding the verdict: "This is a huge international victory for fundamental human rights, religious freedom, and freedom of speech. Voicing one's conscience is a fundamental human right. In this contest between religious freedom and the radical homosexual agenda, religious freedom prevailed."

# Prayer, Action and Breaking News...

## Prayer points: Stephen Crabb MP

Stephen Crabb was elected MP for Preseli Pembrokeshire in May, having previously contested the seat at the 2001 general election. He is the youngest Conservative MP. Stephen serves on the Welsh Affairs Select Committee, and is Vice-Chair of the Retail Industry Group and the All Party Youth Affairs Group. He asks PQ readers to pray:



- ▶ For wisdom in setting priorities, to best utilise his time
- ▶ How best to serve the needs of Preseli Pembrokeshire and his constituents
- ▶ For the right balance of work and family
- ▶ For protection in the rigours of travel between London and west Wales
- ▶ For the work Stephen is doing in his main policy interests: energy, trade and economic issues
- ▶ As he plays a leading role in campaigns over health services in Pembrokeshire
- ▶ For the move to a new constituency office

your chance to get involved...

### SPEAK Soundcheck and the Day of Action 2006

Soundcheck is the annual gathering of the SPEAK network, this year exploring the use of power by ourselves, our society, and by Jesus. This year the event will be held on February 24-26 at St Mary Magdalene Church, Holloway Road, London. The weekend will seek to explore what the Bible says about power, and how it should affect the way we campaign, the way we pray and the way we live. The event will include contributions from Frank Beckett and Elaine Storkey.

The Day of Action: *Bearing the Burdens* will take place on Monday 27 Feb 2006. Meet at 9.00am for a service, at St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, London. Then go on to lobby MPs on the issue of unjust trade, unpayable debt and unfair aid conditions.

Get hold of a Burdens Pack from the SPEAK network support team to find out how you can be part of making this burdens petition happen.

For more details or to book please visit [www.speak.org.uk](http://www.speak.org.uk)

### Government Minister Praises Evangelical Contribution to International Aid and Debt Relief

At a meeting organised by the Evangelical Alliance with grassroots Christian campaigners in Canterbury on 13 December, Gareth Thomas MP stated, "We wouldn't have made the progress we have made if Christians had not been interested." The Minister, who is Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department for International Development (DFID) also urged Christians to "stay engaged and stay interested in development" and to keep campaigning and putting pressure on the Government, "because an awful lot more progress needs to be made".

The lunchtime question and answer session with Mr Thomas was hosted by the Rev David Stedman, minister of Canterbury Baptist Church and attended by local Christians and representatives from over 15 Christian relief and development organisations. Peter Grant, International Director of Christian relief and development charity, Tearfund, answered questions alongside Mr Thomas. Other members of the panel were Julia Wensley, Campaign Co-ordinator for Micah Challenge UK and Ben Gilchrist, Director of SPEAK, a student campaigning group on issues of global justice. The questions ranged from issues of debt relief to climate change, fair trade and the role of smaller NGOs in disaster relief. Ben Gilchrist said, "I don't think the minister really answered the questions on debt and trade in terms of specifics. However, it was good to have this face-to-face dialogue and for those at the grassroots level to be able to ask their questions."

R. David Muir, Public Policy Director for the Evangelical Alliance, who chaired the event, said, "This has been a very useful meeting, but it has also flagged up serious issues that the Government need to address. It also highlighted that we need an ongoing dialogue between Government, evangelical Christians and Christian NGOs on international development issues. It is my hope that DFID will continue to want to work with evangelical Christians to help deliver social justice across a huge range of global needs."

## information

For information on these and any other political issues, please contact our information line on: 020 7207 2129  
Or email: [pub-aff@eauk.org](mailto:pub-aff@eauk.org)

PQ 2005 Published by the Evangelical Alliance  
Whitefield House  
186 Kennington Park Road  
London SE11 4BT  
Tel 020 7207 2100

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Editor: Don Horrocks  
Contributors: Jeremy Balfour, Don Horrocks, Rebecca Hough, Karen Jardine, Vanessa Phoo-Parr, Jim Stewart, Josephine Quintavalle, Gareth Wallace

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