



Christian
Perspectives on
Public Affairs

evangelical alliance
uniting to change society



News and Christian Comment

International Arms Trade

Before Christmas, the Attorney General intervened to stop a criminal investigation by the Serious Fraud Office into alleged corruption surrounding British arms deals to Saudi Arabia. This news emerged within 10 days of the outraged Saudis threatening to buy French Ragale jet fighters in lieu of UK supplier Eurofighter Typhoons if the UK did not drop the legal investigation.

The Attorney General reasoned it was necessary "to balance the need to maintain the rule of law against the wider public interest." He added that no weight had been given to commercial interests or to the national economic interest. Were 50,000 British defence jobs and £5bn of fighter jets not 'commercially interesting'? Now MI6 has challenged the Government's claim that the SFO inquiry was threatening national security.

Jonathan Aitkin helped negotiate the Saudi arms deal. He claimed that 'excessive commissions' were not 'corruption'. Tony Blair's response just before Christmas regarding the Eurofighter deal was that continuing the current SFO investigation would have produced years of "ill feeling" between Britain and a key ally in the Middle East, probably to little purpose.

Such allegations of corruption are not new. When the first deal was signed in 1985 the Guardian published a leading article entitled "Bribes of £600m in jets deal". Labour's front bench defence spokesman, Denzil Davies, had already called on the then Government to confirm or deny reports that it was to pay secret commissions of between £300-600m to secure the deal with Saudi Arabia.

There were also doubts about Saudi Arabia's ability to pay. It was already running a current account deficit of \$25bn, mainly due to high military spending amounting to a third of GDP. It seemed unwise to enter into a huge new arms commitment. In practice, both the US and UK have experienced difficulties in obtaining arms payments from the Saudis.

Prime Ministers Thatcher and Major were both closely involved in the deals, though detail is secret. Robin Cook, when launching New Labour's much vaunted 'ethical foreign policy', quickly ran into trouble with the BAE sale of Hawk jets to Indonesia. It seemed that Labour had not improved the transparency of UK Government involvement in arms sales. Apparently, the UK arms industry takes precedence over

the UK armed forces. Lewis Page, a former Royal Navy officer makes a strong case for total reform of the UK defence procurement system in his book *Lions, Donkeys and Dinosaurs*. Succeeding UK Governments sometimes seem to inflict BAE equipment on the UK armed forces for no better reason than to keep BAE in business.

Notwithstanding the merits or otherwise of Eurofighter, the fact remains that the kind of peacekeeping and counter-terror roles that the UK military is conducting at present are best served by better paid, more numerous and better equipped infantrymen - infantry that have recently been cut to help pay for the Eurofighter.

The cost of Eurofighter to the UK has ballooned from £7bn to £19bn. The aircraft originated in 1982, but it's now 2006 and still no Eurofighter has seen active service. Nothing comes close in terms of project delays and cost overruns. Exporting to dubious regimes will help to reduce Eurofighter's burgeoning unit cost.

Why is such an advanced aircraft needed? In Iraq and Afghanistan there was little credible air opposition. Much of the air support provided to British forces was by US built F16s, F/A18s and A10s. Meanwhile, the Swedes designed their own low cost fighter jets in a nation with the same population as London. As far as Saudi Arabia is concerned none of its neighbours have anything better than the superb F15 Eagle which already equips the Royal Saudi Air force. The only exception is deliberate US policy of supplying Israel with better equipped F15 Eagles. Any Russian built aircraft are far outclassed. There seems to be little moral or military case to sell arms to Saudi Arabia.

There appears to be a lack of real debate about the UK arms industry. Meanwhile, the UK has exported the means of death to regimes such as Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and Argentina's military junta. Notably, human rights organisation Open Doors has previously listed Saudi Arabia as the world's worst human rights violator against Christians claiming an almost total lack of freedoms with its government committing or tolerating serious abuses.

It is sobering to think that as we approach the 25th anniversary of the Falklands War, British bombs sank more Royal Navy ships in that conflict than weapons from any other country: a stark example of the potential contradiction between preserving the lives of our service personnel and safeguarding the commercial success of the UK arms industry. Is this what the Attorney General implies by "national interest"?

PQ from Westminster

SOR Points

The Sexual Orientation Regulations (SORs) question has generated much emotive debate. It's a complex issue. Misunderstanding or misrepresentation of views is common. Christians are not against anyone: the gospel is about acceptance, not rejection. But equally, most wish to be able to disagree with homosexual practice without being labeled 'homophobic'.

Sadly, views often get polarized. Nuanced arguments and sincere motives become lost as claims and counterclaims, myths and allegations, dominate sensationalist headlines. Christ is the model for social engagement in embodying grace and truth. But sometimes Christians express valid concerns in tones perhaps more reflective of fear than love. Conversely, sometimes truth seems to get marginalized in well-meaning attempts to accommodate to the world.

The aspirational protective nature of equality legislation for all is welcome. Whatever peoples' sexual orientation there is no case for abuse or hostility. Christians insist on values of mutual respect and the essential human dignity and inherent worth of all. However, most religious traditions are also deeply committed to lifestyle values and beliefs that set boundaries of sexual activity to within heterosexual marriage. There are genuine fears that a conflicting 'morality' could be imposed. Recently, Christian registrars have been sacked for refusing to celebrate same-sex civil partnerships on conscience grounds. Joe and Helen Roberts were visited by the police following allegations of homophobia for asking their local council to display Christian literature alongside literature promoting gay rights.

Allegations of homophobia are often routinely made by those who miss a key point. There is no wish to discriminate against gay people in service provision. Rather, Christians and other religious groups don't want to find themselves coerced by law to condone, facilitate or promote homosexual activity. This is a crucial distinction. It involves a basic religious liberty – freedom of conscience.

Government faces a tricky balancing act in legislating within a human rights framework. Extending rights for one group can potentially restrict

freedoms of others. Government's task is to ensure that one group's equality does not become another's inequality. But despite assurances about robust exceptions, there remains broad consensus amongst most religious groups and legal experts that currently the SORs still pose a significant threat. Strength of feeling among religious communities on this issue was evidenced by the large demonstration that recently occurred outside Parliament.

The biggest concern is that exceptions designed to safeguard essential religious liberties may be effectively undermined by other overriding provisions in the SORs. This could lead to Christians being sued for harassment. Of course, Christians don't seek to 'harass' anyone. But in legal terms the very low subjective threshold defining harassment creates problems by making the exceptions practically unworkable. Malicious lawsuits may be encouraged. Whilst a church minister may refuse to bless a same-sex partnership, he will nevertheless take significant legal risk if he attempts to explain why.

Other important concerns remain involving religious liberty issues, such as protection of individual conscience in the public arena; freedom of churches and others to advance their teachings and practices; restrictions on commercial and charitable religious organisations; freedoms of Christian conference centres and voluntary organizations to deliver services while maintaining distinctive symbols and codes of conduct; impact in the schools sector regarding sex and religious education. If such genuine concerns are not met, there is real danger that what ends up on the statute book will prove to be the thin end of a wedge that in future may be used to further restrict religious liberty and silence or chill all expression of legitimate opposition to homosexual activity.

Government response to the SORs in the rest of the UK is awaited shortly. In the meantime, Christians everywhere should continue to engage constructively and graciously with the ongoing political process in an endeavour to ensure that proposed legislation is fair to all.

Accommodation of Conscience

The implications of a forthcoming Employment Tribunal on 24-26 January go beyond most cases. A Sheffield magistrate, Andrew McClintock, is the claimant, and the respondent is the Department for Constitutional Affairs. It concerns a case in which the facts – over what was said and done over the time that the matter developed – are not really in question, but in which the detail of human rights law will be central. It turns on the obligation of the courts' management – in effect 'the employer' – to accommodate a position of conscience held by one of their 'staff' (a JP), that arises out of his views on placements for needy children with same-sex couples.

The matter developed during 2004 and 2005 culminating in a decision in January 2006 that is now contested. As same-sex civil partnerships became a legal right, so the potential emerged of a clash between two laws. When children in chaotic households have their cases brought to court by Social Services, the priority under the Children Act 1989 is – quite rightly – the welfare of the child. With the possibility that children may be fostered or adopted by same-sex couples comes consideration of the effect that such a placement may have upon their welfare. For example, teasing in school playgrounds may occur. Long-term consequences are so far unknown. Mr McClintock therefore regarded such a placement as a risky experiment. He holds strongly to traditional Christian values, regarding a family as ideally needing both a mother and

father. Other religions agree: his stance has been endorsed by both a rabbi and an imam.

Accordingly, as a result of his beliefs, Mr McClintock requested that, where such a placement outcome was in prospect, he be excused from officiating. He received an answer that such case filtration was not possible. Therefore, rather than find himself in a position that conflicted with his conscience and in which the child's welfare became problematic, the magistrate resigned from family work. Such developments are nowadays not uncommon for Christians engaged in public service where individual religious conscience is increasingly coming into conflict with public duties. Many people are becoming increasingly aware of possible political threats to the expression of Christian and religious values. They are concerned that some new laws may be seen as attempts to shift the nation's moral goal posts, and that as a consequence more people (not just government officials) are finding themselves in dilemmas of conscience. With the implications so much wider than the fate of this one man, it has seemed appropriate to mount a legal challenge in an attempt to clarify the legal rights of other people in a similar situation.

Many anxious people from all religions will follow this case with interest. It would be extremely concerning for society as a whole if as a result Christians and others progressively withdraw from the public sphere.

PQ from Westminster

Religious Vilification Case To Be Heard Again

On December 14, 2006 the Supreme Court of Victoria, Australia, upheld the appeal against the findings of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal which, following a complaint from the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV), had previously ruled that a seminar conducted by Catch the Fire Ministries (with Pastors Danny Scot and Danny Nalliah) contravened the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001. The Supreme Court ruling set aside the orders of the Tribunal and remitted the proceedings back to be heard and decided again, by a different judge without the hearing of further evidence.

The Tribunal concluded that Pastor Scot had made a number of statements in contravention of the Act, including saying that the Qur'an promotes violence and killing; that Muslim scholars misrepresent what the Qur'an says; that the Qur'an teaches that women are of little value; that Allah is not merciful; that Muslims lie for the sake of Islam; that Muslims are demons and that there is a Muslim threat to Australia. The Tribunal did not accept that other statements about accepting, tolerating, reaching out to and loving Muslim people ameliorated the situation.

The Tribunal said that Pastor Scot was moved by the religious beliefs of Muslims to make statements which would mean that an ordinary reasonable person would be inclined to hate them. But the Supreme Court ruled that the Tribunal had misinterpreted the test for this and did not give enough consideration to the distinction between hatred of religious beliefs and hatred of persons, erroneously assuming that they were identical. The Court also gave greater attention to the educational context of the meeting as a whole and to other statements by Pastor Scot calling on people to love Muslims.

The lead judge also commented that the affront to the feelings of the Muslim witnesses was largely if not wholly irrelevant. As a matter of logic it does not suffice to establish incitement to show that scorn has been poured on certain religious beliefs or practices.

Failure to distinguish between statements about beliefs and persons meant that the Tribunal mistakenly concluded that the Seminar was not a balanced discussion of Muslim beliefs because it disregarded significant aspects of Pastor Scot's statements which, the Supreme Court judgment argued, went a long way to ameliorating any risk of inciting hatred of Muslims. The judgment also suggests that the Tribunal did not take sufficient account of the defence argument that Pastor Scot was justified in saying certain things because they were true.

The judge found certain aspects of Pastor Scot's teaching 'distasteful', 'incorrect', 'bewildering' and exhibiting a 'lack of logic'. But these were irrelevant to the question of vilification and often represent the issues associated with someone speaking in a second language. Moreover, the judge noted 'I was unable to perceive from the tape (of the proceedings of the conference) anything in the manner of Pastor Scot's delivery which rendered his statements more likely to incite the audience to hatred... on any analysis his plea to

love Muslims and to 'minister' to them comes across as sincere enough as do the sounds of his audience's reaction to it'

It is to be hoped that these findings will be disseminated widely. It is perhaps ironic for an Act concerned with vilification that one effect of the case has been to extensively and publicly vilify someone for making various derogatory statements which they did not, in fact make. The law has, arguably, created a situation where such an injustice is more likely to occur. It is now clear that the original judgment was seriously flawed. A law which was intended to enhance religious harmony has, predictably for many, been the cause of considerable friction. The appeal result means that it is a rebuff to many supporters of the Act, including some churches, who thought this law would prevent apologetic and evangelical groups like CTF operating as they do.

It is possible to wonder how the original tribunal could have done so badly. The Supreme Court observed that the way in which the case for Catch the Fire Ministries was presented in the Tribunal hearing made the task for the Tribunal 'extraordinarily difficult'. Consequently, CTF Ministries was reckoned to be responsible for half of its appeal costs. Nonetheless, the ICV has to pay all its own costs as well as half of CTF's and may yet have to pay part of CTF's Tribunal costs.

Experienced lawyers have previously warned of the 'penumbra effect' of legislation like this, whereby the fear of

litigation creates a situation of uncertainty in which individuals and groups feel bound to take additional steps to ensure that no unintended breach of the Act occurs in public meetings. Some visiting speakers have declined to give talks in Victoria which they have given, uncontroversially, in other countries and other Australian states; organisations have restricted attendances at certain meetings or required evidence of church commitment; and the managers of facilities have insisted on giving written disclaimers to all attendees when other groups have hired halls. It has also led to situations where various religious groups become intent on ensuring that other individuals and religious groups do not breach the Act and so embark on 'spying' expeditions to see what is being said in sermons and talks in other places. This does nothing other than create an environment of fear and uncertainty.

The extent of the errors in this case raises serious questions about the on-going operation of the Act. What is most clear is that the story is not yet over. The case is still to be re-determined by the Administrative Tribunal but, politically speaking, will the disaster that has been the Catch the Fire case now add new pressure for the removal of the law?

Dr Brian Edgar, Director of Public Theology, The Australian Evangelical Alliance Inc

For the Supreme Court judgment see:
www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/vic/VSCA/2006/284.html

Failure to distinguish between statements about beliefs and persons meant that the Tribunal mistakenly concluded that the Seminar was not a balanced discussion of Muslim beliefs because it disregarded aspects of Pastor Scot's statements...

PQ from the Nations

Northern Ireland Ahead of his time

Reflecting on the current state of the political process commentators conclude that, ten years ago, it would have been unthinkable to suppose that Sinn Fein might be on the brink of lending their support to the rule of law and order in Northern Ireland. Unthinkable too to suppose that the DUP would be on the verge of sharing power in a Northern Ireland Executive with their nemesis, Sinn Fein. Stranger still might have been the vision of Gerry Adams attending a funeral of a prominent loyalist figure, in a loyalist heartland, alongside the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, government ministers from Dublin, and the Chief Constable of the police service.

And yet here, at the start of 2007, the latter has already been reality, while the others are within our sights. David Ervine, leader of the Progressive Unionist Party, achieved much in his lifetime and the impact he made has come into sharp relief through his death.

Undoubtedly the loss of David Ervine leaves a gaping hole in the political process. In Biblical times prophets came in all sorts of guises. Surely David Ervine was a prophet of our time, consistently calling for unionists to create the right conditions for republicans to lay down their arms, and accept the rule of law and order. That loyalists paramilitaries have to date failed to disarm is something for which Ervine faced constant criticism. And yet this is a goal for which Ervine was constantly striving, even up until his untimely death.

Throughout this unscripted drama the political choreography between Sinn Fein, the two Governments and the DUP has continued. However the sequence of moves has been less than straightforward. While Sinn Fein has finally called its meeting to ratify support for law and order, will this be enough for the DUP to enter into a power sharing executive?

Both sides face huge dilemmas. For one it is being seen to undo the work of those who died for their cause at the hands of the police and army. For the other it is sharing government with those representing gunmen who threatened and sometimes killed their own families, friends and colleagues. The extent of the seismic shift required should not be underestimated but perhaps the time is right.

But let us not forget the courageous step taken by the SDLP to support policing when it was unfashionable for nationalists to do so, or the leap of faith taken nine years ago by the UUP to enter into Government with Sinn Fein.

Political progress does not have to mean a 'check mate' scenario where one should lose out at the expense of another. David Ervine had a vision of a future that was shared, for the good of all in Northern Ireland. As he wrote in an article printed posthumously should this attempt fail, the only answer is to get up and try all over again. Who knows where that might take us in another ten years?

Scotland Future of the Union

As the old adage says Oppositions don't win elections, Governments lose them. That at least is the feeling in Scotland as we approach the Scottish Parliamentary Election in May. The Labour Party is struggling in the opinion polls and consistently lags a couple of percentage points behind the SNP.

The general unpopularity of the Labour Government at Westminster, added to a perception of an uninspiring Labour leadership in Scotland, has created the SNP's best opportunity in a generation to access power. It would be ironic if 300 years after the Act of Union, Scotland was propelled towards independence mainly because of policy decisions taken in London relating to foreign affairs. However, the jury is still out on whether Scots will support independence in any future referendum on the subject or even whether there will be a majority in the next Scottish Parliament in favour of holding such a referendum.

The implications for Anglo-Scots relations of an SNP-led Scottish Executive were exemplified just before Christmas. The SNP had tabled a motion opposing the proposed replacement of Trident. This of course is a matter which is reserved to Westminster. However, sensing an opportunity to split the Labour/Liberal Democrat coalition running the Executive the SNP seized their opportunity. As expected the coalition split along party lines. However, a number of Labour MSPs also voted with the SNP and one Minister subsequently resigned. It can be expected, therefore, that there will be more tension in the relationship with Westminster should Labour

lose power in Scotland on 3rd May.

Despite Cardinal O'Brien stating that he would be relaxed about independence for Scotland, it is difficult to discern from a Christian perspective any likely change in the predominantly secular-humanist social and moral consensus should Scotland become independent. In the goldfish bowl of Scottish politics there are perhaps greater opportunities for the church and individuals to influence political decision-making. To do so Scottish Christians need to re-engage in politics. Evangelicals, in particular, have been guilty of opting out of the political process.

A window of opportunity remains for the church in Scotland to re-engage politically and help to shape a social and political culture which creates the space in the public life of our nation to allow the advancement of the Gospel. This may involve the electoral success of explicitly 'Christian' and/or 'Christian Democratic' parties, but will also require the participation of more Christians in the mainstream political parties. Christians need to ask which candidate in their constituency/region most stands for the application of Gospel values to public life. This might not necessarily be the person standing for a party with the word 'Christian' in the title.

If we fail to re-engage in Scottish politics we will find that increasingly our personal freedom to believe and practice our faith will be restricted. However, far more seriously we will have failed future generations of Scots who will not be given the opportunity to understand and respond to the Gospel.

PQ from the Nations & beyond

Wales A Parliament for Wales?

Many in Wales were still recovering from the excesses of the New Year celebrations when Plaid Cymru's Ieuan Wyn Jones was busy setting out his party's stall for the year ahead.

High on the agenda was a call for a referendum on whether Wales should have a parliament, to be held the same day as the Assembly elections in 2011. A few months ago, such talk would have evoked thoughts of Walter Mitty, but such is the unpredictability of the Welsh political landscape at present that anything is possible.

When the Government of Wales Act finally became an Act of Parliament in July last year, initial perceptions were that the arrangements would last for at least 20 years. However, greater scrutiny has given a much fuller understanding of its implications and many are now envisaging an improved Government of Wales Act to be in place within the next ten years – if not four.

A referendum for a Welsh Parliament, generally believed to be the next step in the devolution process, could only be held with the backing of two-thirds of Welsh Assembly Members.

Although many sense that the Welsh public is not ready to vote yes to a Welsh Parliament at the moment, the current political climate – in which no single party is expected to win an absolute majority in May's elections – is providing campaigning opportunities to build

“ Many are now envisaging an improved Government of Wales Act to be in place within the next ten years – if not four. ”

support for a referendum amongst Assembly Members.

A rainbow coalition of the three opposition parties of Plaid, the Lib Dems and the Tories is one possibility when the votes are all tallied on May 3rd – a prospect that prompted Rhodri Morgan to utter 'the cat is now out of the bag and plotting with the mice to take over the asylum'. Ieuan Wyn Jones has been in talks with the other parties on the referendum issue, exploring a 'policy package' in which the coalition parties pledge to hold a referendum on a Welsh Parliament on the same day as the 2011 Assembly elections.

The surprise show of strength of the Scottish National Party in the opinion polls in Scotland has had a galvanising affect on Plaid. The two parties work very closely together in Westminster and the surge in popularity of the SNP in Scotland has given heart to Plaid's supporters that

their own party can emerge from the political doldrums following disastrous results in the 2005 General Election. Plaid's credibility has been enhanced as well, as Scottish support for independence is perceived as being indicative of pro-devolution sentiments beyond Scotland. All parties in Wales have pro-devolution elements in their ranks but it is arguably Plaid – more directly associated with nationalism than the other parties – who are best poised at present to capitalise from a swing in public opinion towards devolution and a future Welsh Parliament.

Religious Liberty Christians in Iraq

On January 8th, the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, launched a \$60 million appeal to fund its work over the next 12 months for hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced people affected by the conflict in Iraq. As this campaign takes off, attention is focused on Sunni and Shia families forced to leave their homes by spiralling sectarian violence. Yet the fate of non-Muslim minorities, particularly Christians, fleeing Iraq after an escalation in violence deserves equal attention, for the Iraqi Christian population has fallen to a third of its level of twenty years ago.

Attacks on Christians increased last year during the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan, probably in response to a call by militants for increased violence. As Christians continue to leave their homes out of fear of the violence around them, some have also been threatened to speed their departure. Thirty families in Mosul received messages on their mobile phones on 30th September telling them to leave within 72 hours or they would be killed. To many Sunni and Shia militia living in Iraq, Christians are the enemy within. Militants assume a link between Iraqi Christians and the 'Christian' West, and hold them responsible for the invasion and resulting difficulties. Anonymous notes posted to Christian families in Mosul in December spell it out: 'Leave, crusaders, or we will cut off your

heads!' However, many Christians are forced to remain where they are through lack of funds to process their exit from the country,

For Christians remaining in Iraq, there has so far been a cautious welcome from the Kurdish leaders in the north, and with an autonomous Kurdistan proposed in the north of the country, there is now disagreement between Iraqi Christian leaders over whether they should co-operate with Kurdish leaders to create an autonomous area within Iraq's Kurdish federal state, or to create a new federal state solely for minorities. However, either option could make the situation worse by creating a Christian ghetto, and Christians in other areas would then be ordered to go to 'their' area. In addition to this is the problem that the geographical area proposed includes the Nineveh plain which is sandwiched between the Arab and Kurdish regions. Christians simply cannot live in isolation. Furthermore, getting Christians out of Iraq is likely to prove harder in 2007, as both Jordan and Syria indicated in December 2006 that they may be forced to close their borders to refugees, now they have run out of the capacity to cope with more. If this happens, the Christians left trapped in Iraqi cities with a hostile majority population face a bleak future.

For more information on how to help Iraqi Christians, go to www.barnabasfund.org/articles/appeals/current.php

Prayer, action and breaking news...

Prayer points: Sarah Reed



Sarah Reed is married to Andy Reed, Member of Parliament for Loughborough. Andy was first elected to Parliament in 1997 and has been married to Sarah for 14 years. Andy and Sarah have two young children and live in Loughborough. She would like to encourage readers to pray for all our elected (and hereditary) members regardless of their political colour, noting that it sometimes helps to remember that the face you might like to rant at through the tv screen is also likely to be a husband, wife, Mum or Dad! She asks readers to pray:

- That regardless of their position members may be humbled by God's authority and that Christians will engage positively in public debate and demonstrate God's grace.
- That when there are so many pressing demands on Members' time pray that the family can still be a priority. Pray that there may be ways of finding quality time together particularly when the family home is outside Westminster.
- For all families that are under stress and are having to cope with separation either as a result of work or relationship problems.
- For all those who take on supporting roles. Particularly those caring for young children, the sick or elderly.
- That in a world where people are being sold a lifestyle of always putting themselves first may they see around them the needs of others. We pray that God will build up a nation of change-makers. When our daily news saturates us with the world's problems, guard us against compassion fatigue and see how we can each play our part.
- That we also remember the many Christians who are suffering persecution throughout the world for practicing their faith and trying to make a difference in a world that doesn't want to hear.
- For our local communities and those who give up so much of their time to make them thriving areas to live.
- For areas that are failing to thrive, that have no sense of community or trust. Pray that God will send the right people to these areas and equip them to break down the barriers of fear.

Gambling Addiction

A British Medical Association report published on 16th January warns that the Gambling Act due to come into force in September will increase the numbers of problem gamblers. Concerned Christians have been warning of this for several years. With the announcement of the location of the UK's first 'super-casino' expected at the end of January, this report is timely in its concerns for young people and calls for more funds for the NHS to treat gambling addicts. The Evangelical Alliance highlighted similar concerns in its response to the Gambling Commission's consultation in January 2006. A copy of the this response can be found at www.eauk.org/public-affairs/socialjustice

Charities Act 2006

The Charities Act 2006 came onto the statute book on 8th November. As readers of *PQ* will know the Evangelical Alliance has been working with its partners over several years together with Government in an endeavour to ensure the Act is not detrimental to the interests of religious charities. We believe this to be the case, however all charitable organisations now need to acquaint themselves with the Act as soon as possible. Excellent guidance to the new legislation is available on the websites of our following member organisations:

Stewardship: www.stewardship.org.uk/
Anthony Collins:
www.anthonycollins.com/uploaded/File/December_2006_special%20edition.pdf

We shall continue to work with our partners and the Charity Commission during 2007 in developing user-friendly guidelines relating to the subject of public benefit which we hope to publish jointly in due course for the benefit of all Alliance members.

PQ 2006 ©Evangelical Alliance

All rights reserved. Nothing in this publication may be reprinted without the express permission in writing of the copyright owners. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Evangelical Alliance.

Editor Don Horrocks

Contributors Rebecca Chapman, Brian Edgar, Don Horrocks, Karen Jardine, Jim Stewart, Gareth Wallace

Evangelical Alliance UK

Whitefield House 186 Kennington Park Road London SE11 4BT
Tel 020 7207 2100 Email info@eauk.org

information

For information on these and any other political issues, please contact our information line on:
020 7207 2129
or pub-aff@eauk.org

