



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Lord [redacted]  
House of Lords

22 May 2013

Dear Lord [redacted]

Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill

We write to urge you in the strongest terms to oppose this Bill.

Regrettably, our ability as MPs to oppose, amend or scrutinise this Bill was heavily constrained. At Second Reading, backbench speeches were limited to only 4 minutes. The main parties announced a free vote but we saw varying degrees of coercion, with threats made, for example, to an MP's future political career or withdrawal of party support at future elections.

Rather than allowing a Committee of the Whole House, the Government instead delegated the Bill to a Committee of 19 MPs. Its membership was stacked 15 to 4 in favour of the Bill and not a single amendment was accepted by the Government. The Committee debates were limited to only 5 days. (By way of comparison, the Standing Committee on the Hunting Bill in 2002 lasted 14 days.)

Yet the Government presses on without any mandate from a party manifesto. We are all elected representatives but none of us was elected on a platform to redefine marriage. Genuine concerns about the impact on society's understanding of marriage and the Bill's implications for free speech and civil liberty have been swept aside. The consultation exercise was always about 'how' to introduce the changes, not whether to do so.

Our postbags testify to the deep unpopularity of this Bill. Most of our constituents simply believe marriage is a unique institution that forms the bedrock of society and should therefore be left as it is. Millions of people with marriage certificates imprinted "Marriage Act 1949" are entitled to ask what right anyone has to redefine their own marriages over their heads.

We urge you, on behalf of our constituents, to reject this deeply flawed Bill.

Yours,

Cont'd

Jim Paice

Edward Leigh

Glyn Davies

Fiona Bruce

Richard Drax

Jim Shannon

Tim Loughton

David Simpson

Jim Dobbin

Karl McCartney

Stewart Jackson

Therese Coffey

David Burrowes

Gerald Howarth

Craig Whittaker