

Zeitschrift: Der Kreis : eine Monatsschrift = Le Cercle : revue mensuelle
Band: 26 (1958)
Heft: 10

Artikel: Wolfenden plan on homosexuality, rejected by Scottish assembly
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-570062>

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Wolfenden Plan on Homosexuality, rejected by Scottish Assembly

(from: Manchester Guardian, Manchester)

Dr. Davidson told the Assembly that homosexual conduct was «so essentially an unnatural vice and so obviously injurious to the social welfare of any community» that it requires special legislation. The present law reflected the «extremely wide disapproval and the rank abhorrence» in which such conduct was held.

To approve the Wolfenden Committee's recommendation would be regarded as condoning such behaviour at a time when there was in many quarters «a dangerous tendency to blur the distinction between right and wrong behaviour.» At the same time, the committee urged «a more compassionate and understanding attitude» towards the homosexual who was «afflicted with a constitutional abnormality that was nothing less than a tragedy.»

The Rev. G.T.H. Reid moved an amendment directly reversing the committee's motion by inviting the Assembly to support the Wolfenden committee's recommendation. Mr Reid has red hair and a blazing passion for logic and justice. Both played their part on his impact on the audience.

In considering homosexual behaviour, he said, people tended to be at the mercy of the intense feelings of repugnance it aroused in the normal man. The whole field of sexual behaviour aroused strong prejudices. It was not long since good church people were «shrieking protests» against homes for unmarried mothers and their children on precisely the same grounds as were advanced by the committee—that they would encourage vice. There was no moral element involved in a man's being homosexual and there was no known cure for his condition.

It was a matter of arrested sexual development, he continued, not the result of moral depravity. It was «fantastic» that the sins of the heterosexual should go unpunished, while the homosexual was liable to life imprisonment. Adultery was once a criminal offence in Scotland, but nobody thought the law condoned adultery because that was no longer so.

It was a «dreadful argument» that the present law, even though it operated unjustly against homosexuals, should be retained «to protect society.» The first function of a law was not to protect society against any element within it but to defend society against injustice. While it might be right for the law to keep in step with public opinion, it was not for the Church to wait upon the general moral sense of the community but to lead it.

Professor J. Pitt-Watson, seconding, thought the harm done to society by homosexual behaviour could «not begin to compete with its trail of broken hearts and broken homes and its disastrous effect on children.»

Mr. Reid's amendment was defeated by a sizeable but far from overwhelming majority, and the Assembly approved its committee's recommendation.

Morals and Politics: A Year after Wolfenden

(from: Daily Telegraph, London)

Controversy aroused by the Wolfenden Report on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution has by no means died down. While the Government is still being